NOVEMBER
20th
1925
25c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

Georges Surdez
Harold Lamb
William P. Barron
Hugh Pendexter
Alan LeMay
Barry Scobee
Ralph R. Perry
Vance H. Morris
Leslie McFarlane

3 Complete Novelettes

NOVEMBER 20th ISSUE, 1925
VOL. LV No. 5

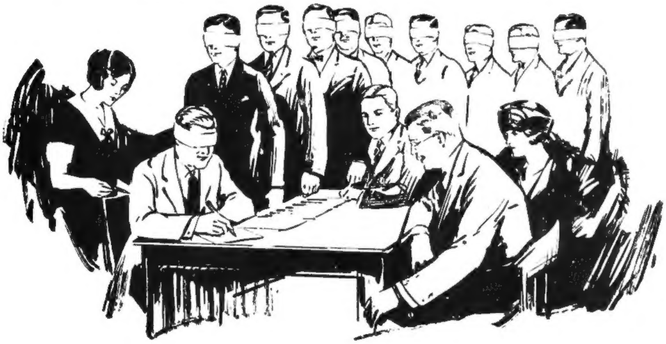
ADVENTURE

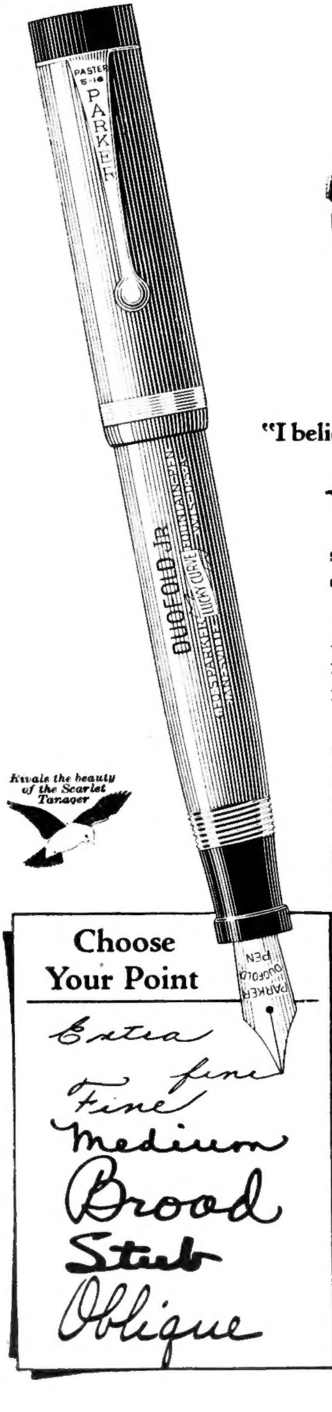
25 Cents

8 Men out of 10

Picked the Duofold Blindfolded

From 11 New Pens of Different Makes





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Volume 55
Number 5

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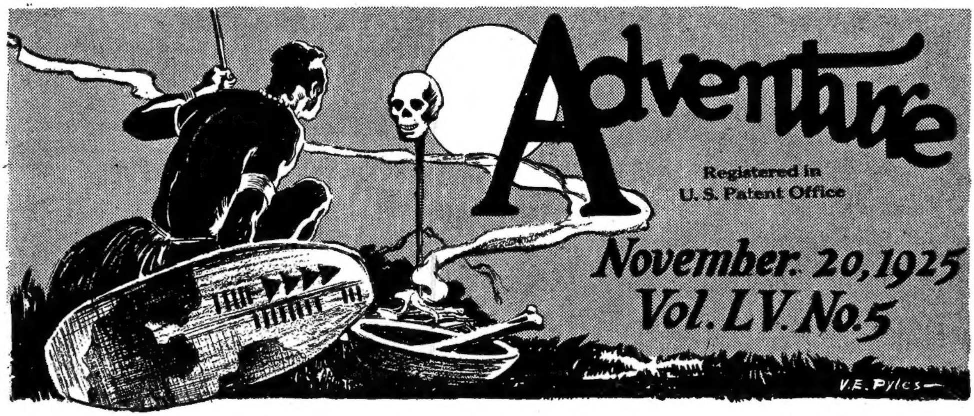

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Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York, N. Y.
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in advance — **Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents**

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 90 cents.

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Headings . . . . **V. E. Pyles**

Cover Design . . . . **G. C. Delano**

One New Serial and Three Complete Novelettes

THE Muscovite Tsar desired the jewels of the Turkoman. Who dared he send to their city, Urgench? Who but the Don Cossacks? "WHITE FALCON" is a three-part serial of the steppes by Harold Lamb beginning in the next issue.

DANIEL WARD had been convicted. He would hang in the morning. But the night brought a storm that strangely altered a strange situation. "IN THE BLIZZARD," by Leslie McFarlane, is a complete novelette in the next issue.

EZRA SQUAM'S crude fiddling seemed to fascinate the cunning Canadian silver gray, but not enough to put him off his guard. "JERIAS," a complete novelette by Elmer Brown Mason, will appear in the next issue.

WHEN counterfeiters put bogus dollars on the market it's bad enough. But when they start killing people it's time for the sheriff to shine up his star and get going. "SILVER 41," a complete novelette by W. C. Tuttle, will appear in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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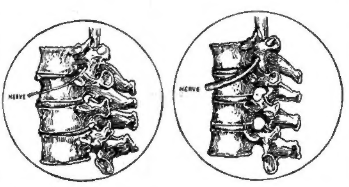
The spine is a series of small bones placed one above the other. Between each pair of bones (vertebrae) is a cartilage which acts as a cushion or shock absorber, taking up the weight and shocks thrown on the spinal column as we stand or walk. Since nothing in the ordinary activities of us humans stretches the spine, these once soft and resilient pads are flattened down, become thin and hard. One's spine then does not absorb the shocks sustained *but transmits them straight to the base of the brain.* Then come headaches — backaches — "nerves"— insomnia—habitual tiredness. We have not one-half the force and "pep" we should have. We do not get the joy out of work or play we should. We are only about 50 per cent efficient.

When the cartilage is worn down to a certain point, nerve impingement may result. That is, two of the vertebrae may curve so close together as to "pinch" or press upon a nerve leading from the spinal column to an organ which the nerve controls. Then there *is* trouble! If the impinged nerve has to do with the liver, then liver trouble. If with the stomach, stomach trouble. If with the bowels, constipation. And so on.

Why You Must Keep Your Spine "ELONGATED"



How bones close in on the delicate nerves when the spine "settles," shriveling the nerves and draining vitality.

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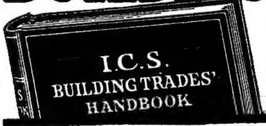

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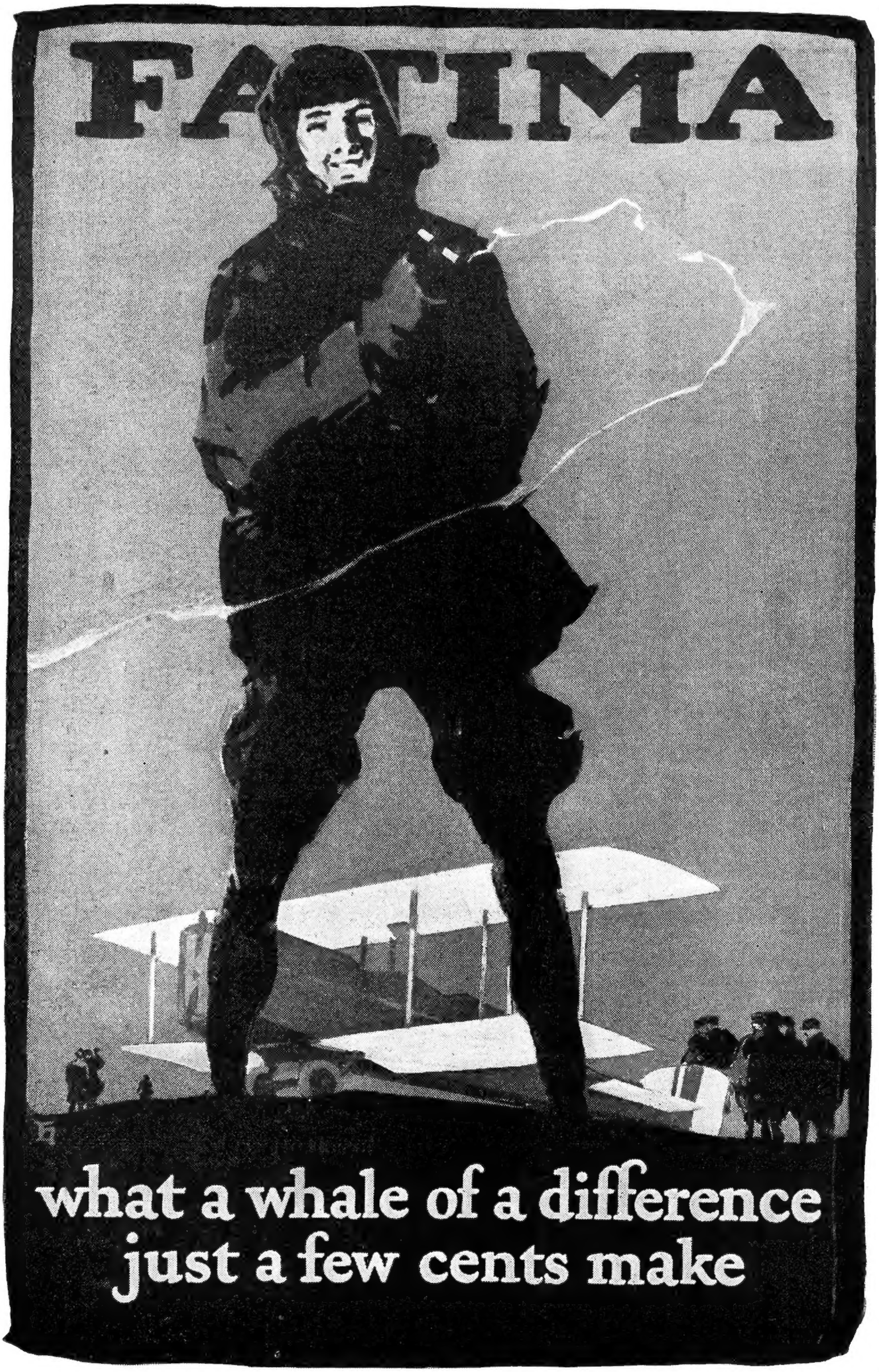
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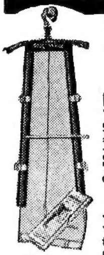

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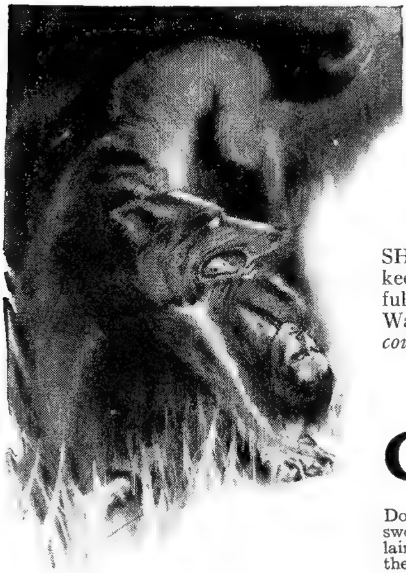

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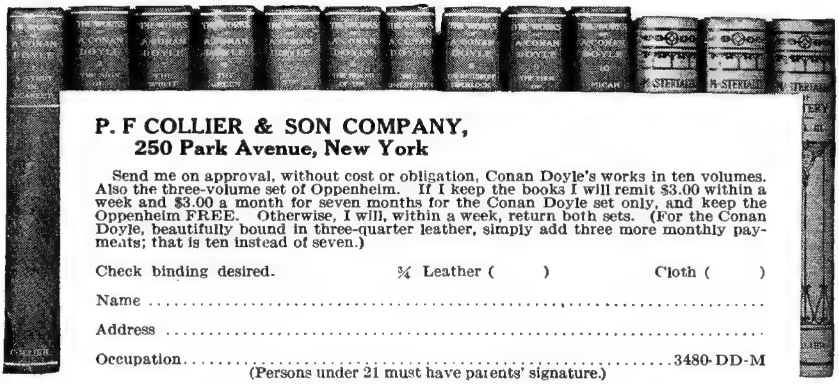

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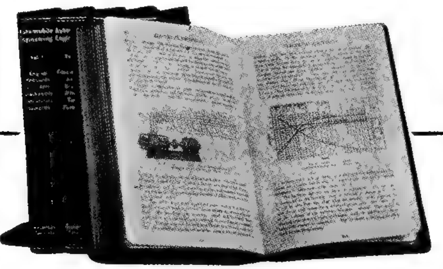

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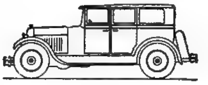

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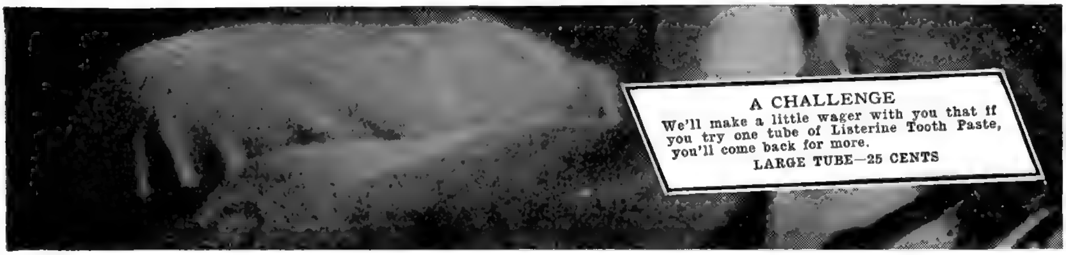

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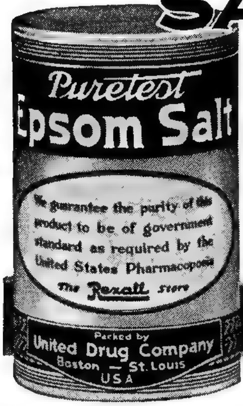
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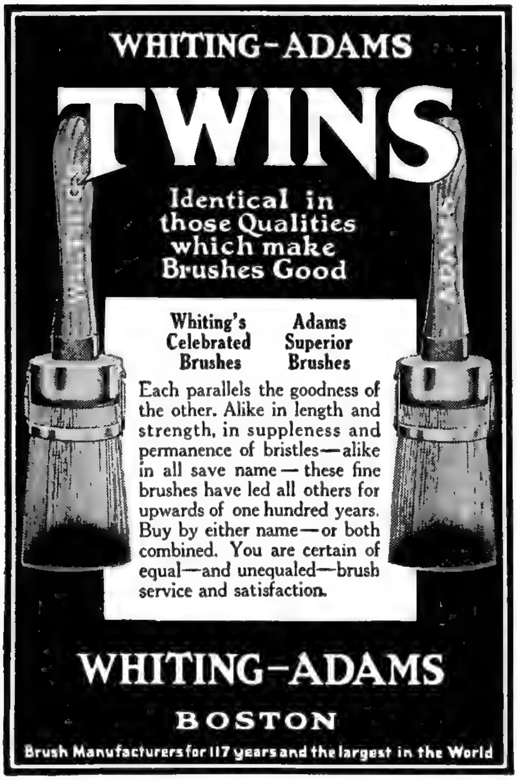
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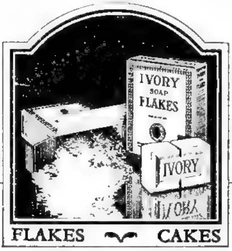

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Adventure

November 20,
1925
Vol. LV No. 5

MARK of ASTRAKHAN

A Complete Novelette by HAROLD LAMB

Author of "The Snow Driver," "The Sword of Honor," etc.

I AM Barbakosta, the stag hunter. My dogs are worth looking at. Now, I have no horses. But when I was younger I had a fine string—Tcherkessian breeds.

It is true, your honor, that I would rather sit here in the sun against the wall of the tavern than *jigit* around yonder where the young fellows are showing off their horses to the girls. They did not steal those ponies from the Tcherkessians up in the foothills. They bought them from the gipsies. They pretend they stole the horses, but that is a lie.

In my day I got many a fine nag from the Tcherkessian *aüls*. When it was dark, with knives in my belt, I would crawl up like a shadow into the stone-walled pastures of the villages. That was the way of it, your honor!

Pistols—like those long horse-pistols in your honor's belt—are not good for anything in the dark. They flash and roar, and you can see nothing for a moment afterward, and God only knows where the bullet has gone. That is bad.

I have sat for an hour waiting for sunrise near a thicket where a stag has slept the night. It was no easy matter to stalk anything in those days of matchlocks. Now, your honor has a fine flintlock with a long barrel. Eh, I would like to try it out. I can still see an eagle under the clouds against the snow cap of Mount Kasbek, yonder. Once I had a *kounak*, a friend who

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called these mountains the Caucasus. He said, too, that my name was Uncle Konstantine.

Yet he was not a liar. He was a man of his word, a hard man—altogether after my heart. Your honor knows that when we Cossacks have a friend we would pull out an eye for him. This one came to me out of a snow-storm after he had traveled from the edge of the world.

Nay, that is truth! It is also true that he drank, cup for cup, with Stenka Razin, lord of the steppe, *ataman* of the Volga brigands. That was a night of fear. Never were men so feared on the steppe as these two. And in the end God rewarded them in a strange fashion, one with death, the other with banishment. And they were ready. They desired nothing more than that. Such men they were. A little your honor may have heard of them at the battle of the Volga mouths. Always battles and hangings are written down in books by the chroniclers. But what is said of the men?

What does your honor know of the terror that came to Astrakhan, or of Chvëdor, the black priest, or the young lass that became a Cossack?

Here, then, is the tale:*

IT WAS a bad night, that one. Snow covered the trails on the steppe, and it was so deep you could not feel the way with your feet any longer. The wind picked it up and whirled it in the air—the east wind that comes off the sea.

And it moaned, the wind, as if the *Tchertiaka*, the arch-fiend, were riding across the stars. Only you couldn't see the stars at all. It cut through sheepskins as if through cotton.

Nay, you could not feel the way and when you opened your eyes you could not see anything at all. Perhaps a pony could have taken you from one place to another, but I had no pony. Mine had strayed, I thought, when the storm began, and I was seeking them. It was many days, as you shall see, before I learned that Bassangor Khan and his Nogai Tatars had made off with them.

I searched, keeping direction by the wind and the beating of the surf on the edge of the sea. And I went forward toward a dark shape that turned out to be not a horse or a clump of sedge, but a man.

He was not a Tatar. He had a cloak wrapped over his head and great boots that came above his knees, the tops turned down and flopping when he made a step. A horse would not endure a rider who wore boots like that.

When I peered at his face I saw it was dark and broad, with a thin black mustache that ran from ear to ear. His teeth were chattering like the fangs of a wolf at bay. But this was not at all on account of fear.

Nay, I put my hand on his coat and it was wet. Not from the snow's touch, but soaked with water. And God is my witness, it was no night to be upon the steppe in wet garments.

I asked him what he was doing, and he shook his head, not understanding. I thought of the missing horses and of my cabin, and decided to lead the stranger to my place. I was born on the steppe, and my days have been passed beyond the border among the tribes of Islam—Tcherkessians,* Tatars and others. Because of that, I learned to look at matters through their eyes.

They have a word that explains everything that happens—*kismet*. And perhaps it was written that I should come upon this stranger, nearly dead with cold on the edge of the steppe by the sea.

"Well," I said to myself, "a life may be saved if the stranger is given shelter."

And in the end I was rewarded for this thought, as you shall see.

"Come!" I said, and gave him the end of my shawl girdle to hold so he would be able to follow me and I would know if he tumbled into a drift.

He fell more than once, but he did not drag on the girdle and he did not complain when I lost the way and circled back to find it. Yet, I think if I had not found him, he would have made his way to the Tatar tents or to an *aül* of the hill people. That was the kind of man he was.

Before very long we sighted the lantern I had left in the door of my cabin. When the door was shut and the stranger stood by the smoking stove, he swayed like a hamstrung pony.

I heated some *gorilka* steaming hot, but his fingers were numbed so that he could not hold the cup, and I held it until he got it down. Then I made him sit on the stove while I pulled off his heavy morocco boots, being filled with curiosity because his garments were such as I had never seen before on a man. The cloak was velvet and had belonged to some Moslem officer, but the coat was that of a Frank, a Christian from Europe. His *sharivari*, bag trousers, were voluminous black damask, such as a Tcherkessian or a Cossack might wear.

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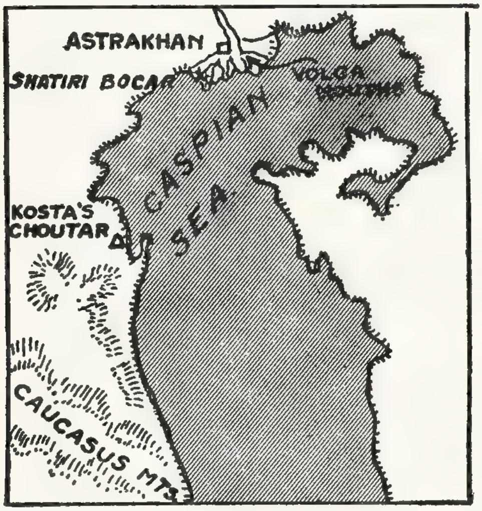
*The eventsrelated by Barbakosta took place in the years 1670-1671 and are preserved in the journal of the unknown officer who visited the Caucasus. The author has attempted to give the narrative as Barbakosta first told it.

*Circassians.



He had on nothing else except a shirt of clean white linen embroidered with small crosses of St. George, and an Armenian must have made that. When everything was off, he lay down on the stove to dry himself.

His limbs were not long, but massive as a bear's. His ruddy face with its black mustache and deep-set gray eyes seemed to be stone. Not a smile or frown crossed it, and by looking at him I could not tell whether he was suffering or pleased in the least.

"*Zdorovenki bou-ly!*" I said, dipping a cup for myself. "Health to you!"

The gray eyes of the stranger considered me, and I think I puzzled him as much as he did me, though he did not show it.

"*Touloumbash!*" he said presently, and I was more surprized than ever because that was his way of saying "*tch l'oum 'a basha,*" which means pasha or master of the drinking in Osmanli Turkish.

Now I had picked up a good deal of Turkish from the fur merchants in Tiflis and Astrakhan and others, and I asked him in that tongue if he had come from Constantinople.

He nodded, and I asked if he were not a Christian, a Nasrani.

Again he assented, and I became more surprized, because the stranger wore the garments of half Asia and knew Turkish, and looked altogether like a Cossack except for his eyes, which were tawny gray.

I asked him where he came from, and he considered, searching for words. It became clear to me that Turkish was not his own language.

"*Mour dan,*" he responded. "From the sea."

Somewhere before then I had heard other men say, 'from the seas,' and they were pirates.

"From what sea, effendi?"

In this fashion I addressed him because it seemed to me that he was a man of rank, possibly a chief in some tribe of Frankistan. And in this I was right.

"That one." He pointed over his shoulder toward the east where we had been wandering, and he thought of a question himself. "What in the name of all the —— is it called and where is it?"

I became more curious than ever. Here was the stranger making his way out of the sea into the snow, and asking me in the oaths of a Turkish slave galley where he had come from. Eh, I have been in many tight places. I have been in the salt desert and the Mountains of the Eagles, but it has never happened that I did not know the place and the way in and the way out as well.

"*Mour Mazanderan,*" I responded. "The Sea of Mazanderan. The Franks call it the Caspian."

IT IS, of course, an inland sea. Men say it is like no other in the earth because it lies down in the earth itself as if a great pit had been dug in other days and filled with salt and water. You can not go from it to any other sea; only up the great river Volga into our steppe. No tall ships journey on it—only our barks and sailing skiffs and the oar galleys of the Moslems. And in other days it had been a sea of the Moslems, until a man came who took it from them.

"The ——!" he said.

A very little I explained to him. The Caspian was like a bear sitting up on its haunches. And it sat on Persia with its tiny hills and garden valleys. To the east, where the forelegs of the bear might be, were the waste lands—the gray sand deserts and the nomad tribes. To the north was the steppe, around the head of the bear and the river Volga, with the great town of Astrakhan which was held by the Muscovites, where the river runs into the sea. And my cabin was on the west where the steppe runs into the peaks of the Caucasus, about two weeks' ride from Astrakhan.

And all about the Volga on the breast of the steppe is the country of the Cossacks, of the Jaick and the Don, who once were free men, but are now under the rule of the Muscovite.

While I explained this to the stranger I filled and lighted my water-pipe, giving him the stem.

"Tell me your name," I bade him, "and your tribe."

I could see that the sea and the country I described to him, all of the world I knew, had been unknown to him, and my curiosity grew the more.

He thought for a moment, and then said—

"Mark."

"Is that all the name?"

"It is enough."

"And where are your people?"

He tried to tell me in his slave galley Turkish, but I could not understand. Ships he mentioned and a long, long journey over the sea and then islands.

I asked then how many days it had taken him to come from his country, and he told me as many days as were in one winter and one summer, and this seemed to be a lie. Who could journey for a year without going over the edge of the world?

Nevertheless, he told the truth. He had come from beyond the edge of the world, and the name of the place sounded like Marak. He was telling the truth, but I could not understand.

Very patiently he sat on the stove, the stem of the hubble-bubble pipe in his hand, like a bear—a big bear in the prime of life, stripped of its fell. And before long I noticed what I should have seen long ago—that his eyes were sunk and his belly drawn in with hunger. He had not eaten for a day and a night and the part of another day.

I was ashamed because I had not given him food, and I set about making barley gruel and roasting the quarter of a wild boar that had been hanging outside under the rafters. It was a hard winter on the steppe, that one; but my cabin had a good stock of meat.

"*Chlieb sol,*" I bowed to him when the boar's meat and the gruel was ready. "I bid you to my bread and salt, Mark."

As for him, he got up and put on his shirt; then he bowed, not as we Cossacks do, bending the head to the girdle, but with a downward thrust of the shoulders and a slight outward sweep of the right hand. Then he began to eat very slowly for all his hunger, and when he had done, the shank bone of the boar was picked bare, the bowl emptied of gruel. For a while we drank brandy until the last devilkin of frost had left our fingers and our hearts were thumping soundly. Mark went to sleep where he sat, on the stove, and I put sheepskins over him, kindling up the fire good and plenty.

When a man has come over the edge of the world, and has been cast into the waters of an angry sea, and has been upon the steppe when the wind is like the archfiend, he has need of sleep and a fire under him. A good fire.

THE storm lasted for three days and, when it ended, the snow had covered everything except the tips of the sage bushes. Even the deer were snowed in the *barcas*, the little gullies of the foothills. A man could not walk in that snow until its crust had hardened.

Mark went to the door and looked at the white hills and the cloudless blue sky and the pinnacles of the great mountains to the south, and I could not tell whether he was pleased or grieved. But it was clear that he had not seen such a land until now. He liked to sleep on the stove, but he always left my place clear for me. The rents in his coat he sewed up very neatly, and he greased his boots with bear's fat. Nor would he help himself to brandy unless I was drinking.

Our next bout with the spirits was a long one. Mark kept pace with me, cup for cup. In time I became both sad and gay, and sang a song of the Cossack people:

"Glorious fame will arise,
Among the brothers, among the Cossacks,
Till the end of time."

Mark liked the song. He kept time, beating with his hand. And when I had done, he sang. His voice was deep and throaty, but it rang out finely in the cabin. And the song had a beat to it that I liked. When he had repeated the first words of the chorus I joined in—though the words were unknown to me—thus:

> "Blow high, blow low—what care we,
> On the coast of the high Barbaree."

That night it was Mark who put me to bed. Eh, he had a hard head on him.

In time I went into the valleys again to hunt and to discover where my ponies were, and brought back many Ufa marten skins and some skins of the little black mountain bear, so we did not lack for meat—or barley or honey, for that matter.

One day I came back to the cabin about sunset, and on the trail I saw the tracks of four ponies that looked like mine. The door was shut and I could not see through the horn windows, so I circled the *choutar* and found that the four horses had gone away again. Then I discovered a great deal of blood sunk in the snow before the door and many footprints. Some were the horsehide riding boots of Tatars and some were Mark's broad prints. I thought that there had been trouble, and it was a bad thing.

If Tatars had come, they would have slain Mark and taken away everything I had in the hut. Usually the Nogais did not trouble me because I did them no harm; but the winter was a hard one and many of their ponies had died. So they had come for the food and the weapons and the garments in my place, doubtless having watched me go out that morning, unaware that Mark was in the cabin.

Most of all I was sorry for Mark. He had worn no weapon, and had never shown any inclination to use one of mine. I had taken the matchlock with me and the four Nogais must have had arrows. From the amount of blood, it appeared that he had killed or hurt one of them, and that would have been his end.

So I thought. But Mark was sitting on the stove, the stem of the hubble-bubble in his hand just the same as ever, except that his eyes were like bits of light in his dark face. I looked around at the weapons in the cabin. There were the nine Tcherkessian daggers hanging in place, and the rusted yataghan that a dying Turkoman had let me have. But the heavy scimitar was on the stove beside Mark. I took the blade from the sheath; it was not bloodied, but had been cleaned painstakingly with sand and oil, so that the blood was all gone from the channels.

This had been the weapon Mark used, and I wondered what had happened in my cabin.

"Eh, Mark, how was it?"

The four Nogais had all entered the hut on foot. They were surprized to find Mark sitting on the stove. At first they moved around without touching anything. Then one of them caught up the cask of brandy and another threatened Mark with a knife. He took down the scimitar from the wall before they realised what he was doing, and when they ran at him he put two on their backs. One was cut between the shoulder and throat and one in the groin.

When this had been done the two others carried their wounded brothers to the horses without being molested by Mark, who stayed in the cabin when he saw their bows. It was well for him he did that. They did not try to enter the door again because they were afraid of his sword. Afterwards he went out and watched them ride to the south.

"*Shabash!*" I cried. "Well done!"

If the food and the weapons and the pelts had been taken from the cabin, we would have been no better off than hamstrung rabbits. On the other hand, Mark had wounded two of the Nogais, and their brothers would certainly come from the camp to make an end of us twain. The Nogais are great thieves, but they do not take up the sword unless they have a blood feud. They had one now.

That evening when I had thought it all over, I told Mark we must go from the cabin.

"Nay," he said at once. "I will go, if it's my hide they want. Why should you leave your cabin?"

"Where, *kounak moi*, would you go?"

Aye, I called him my brother-friend. It is not every man who will stand up to four armed Tatars in a hut for the sake of the belongings of another man. The Tatars would not have hurt him if he had sat still.

After he thought about it, he said he would go to Astrakhan where I had told him there was a Muscovite governor and many officers from Frankistan. Then I said I would go to Astrakhan with him.

Why not? For three years I had not talked with my brother Cossacks, or heard tidings of what was going on in the world.

Already the ice was breaking up in the rivers and the sun was eating through the crust of snow. We would be able to make our way along the trails, and when we reached the northern plain the snow would be gone. It was not pleasant to walk on our feet but it was better to do that than to be buried in the snow.

The next morning I made a bundle of the pelts. It was very heavy, but Mark carried it easily on his shoulders. Before setting out, I gave him the scimitar, saying that a man who went unarmed in this country would not live very long. He thrust it through his belt and smiled, the first time I had seen him smile since he came out of the storm.

THE nine daggers I put in my shawl girdle and took the arquebus on my arm, with a pack made up of the barley, salt, a cook pan, tallow and flint and steel, also powder and bullets in a separate leather sack.

"Now for the road!" I said.

So we closed the door of the *choutar* and set forth for Astrakhan, neither of us minded to turn out for any one. We had finished the brandy the night before, and it was indeed the will of God that kept us on the trail, because a dozen suns were floating in the sky over me. Hornets were buzzing in my ears and flies crawling up and down my back.

And that morning I knew who Mark was. We had come to understand each other well enough in Turkish and as we went forward he talked.

This place called Marak had nothing to do with his name. It was America.

A strange place, by all the ——! It lay beyond the great sea, beyond Frankistan where the Christian tribes of Europe have their camps. Mark had been born in a frontier *stanitza*, called Virginia, where *tabak** was grown as at Astrakhan, and the white men fought against nomad tribes that were very much like our Tatars.

When he was old enough to own a gun, Mark went to an island off this coast of America on the other side of the world with his father, who was a governor of the island. There they were raided by other Franks, who were Spaniards and came in ships. The Spaniards must have been like the Turks of Constantinople, because their sultan was an emperor who claimed dominion over all this new world and had multitudes of slaves. His ships were full of gold and silver, like the galleons of the sultan.

Mark was not made a slave because he escaped from the Spaniards and found his way to another island where was a city named Tortuga.

Here were gathered a brotherhood of men who had come to band themselves together in this way. They had voyaged to the islands to hunt wild cattle, which were plentiful. The meat of the steers they smoked and dried and sent away in ships. Before long they found that they could take plunder easily by going out in their sailing skiffs and lying in wait for the treasure ships of the Spaniards. Then they began to build and to capture tall ships of their own and to go against the fleets of the Spaniards.

The men of this brotherhood were called the *buccaneers* of America, although the Spaniards called them pirates and the hornets of Tortuga.

They grew in number and power until the other kings of Frankistan began to encourage them with gifts of powder and weapons and money to make war on the Spaniards, because these kings were not strong enough to stand against the Spaniards in the new world.

"Eh," I explained to Mark, "your brotherhood is like the fellowship of the Cossacks. When the Muscovite nobles and the Poles wish us to fight the Turks, they make gifts to us. When we do any plundering on our own account, they call us pirates and cry death to us."

"That is so," he assented.

I had spoken in jest, but it was indeed as he said. Did not the buccaneers choose their own *ataman*, or chief, to lead them? Did they not take new names when they joined the brotherhood of that coast, as we do? They had no wives in the camp at Tortuga, and when they had made a successful raid they scattered their plunder in a fine debauch, as the Cossacks do. Why not? What does it avail a man to store honey and mead in cellars and gold in chests?

When we have such things we go into the

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* Tobacco

streets, and all who pass by may drink or eat at our will.

"Eh," I thought, "my *kounak* does not always sit on the stove. There is cold blood in him, but fire as well. He will kindle things up in Astrakhan."

And, in truth, he did so. Though not as I had thought. I had seen much of his spirit, but not all. It would have been better for us if we had stayed in the *choutar* in the Caucasus in spite of a feud and Tatars.

"How did you come, *kounak*," I asked, "from this nest of pirates in the sea beyond the edge of the world?"

"I did not come. I was brought, Uncle Kosta. Among the Spaniards was an *amir* of the sea who had slain my father and my mother. I sought his ship for a long time among the islands of the Americas. In the end I found it—in company with three others."

He looked out over the glittering snow with narrowed eyes, as in that day he might have gazed over the shining sea at the four ships of his enemies.

"I cut him down in his own cabin, but before night I and the men who survived were prisoners of the Dons. They brought us to Algiers to be sold as slaves to the people of the Barbary pashas. I was taken by a Persian *mirza* who was far from his own country. He went in a galleon to Constantinople and from there into another sea. Then we crossed beneath high mountains into a land of many cities—Mazanderan, I think. Persia was not far away when the *mirza* was taken sick and died. I have known worse men than he."

Mark thought for a while, and shifted the burden on his back.

"I never saw Persia, Uncle Kosta. They put me into an oar galley that was being fitted out in that lake you call the Caspian. There was talk of a war on the lake. Some pirates had come down from the north, and the Muhammadans were sending galleys against them. When we did go out of the harbor, a storm came up, and the galley, besides being ill-built, was not the craft for a storm. It broke up on a sand bar and I swam ashore."

"You have a horned soul in you, Mark. You are not easily killed."

In fact, luck was with us for a while. At the Kuma River we traded our pelts with a wandering band of Kalmuks, for horses. It is true that the nags were not round-bellied Kiptchak stallions. They were all bones and sores and evil temper, and our saddles were strips of felt. But all cattle were lean at that time, and hunger was like a curse on the steppe.

The tribesmen were in a black mood. Before long they would be able to glean milk out of the mares and make themselves drunk—aye, even the babes at the women's breasts—from the fermented milk. Then they could take honey from the wild hives and fish from the streams. But not yet. I was glad to get across the Kuma with a whole skin.

We gave the ponies some barley, and before long the steppe showed green in patches, and they were able to graze after a fashion. Because here on the Caspian the steppe is not like our Cossack land. The *al-kali* grass is poisonous to horses, good only to be burned so that soap can be made from the ashes. And when we looked to find wells in rocky pits, we found only layers of shining salt.

Almost in a day the snow ended and the steppe became brown. Waves of sand appeared at the sea's edge, where we followed one of the *Kozaki khoda*, the Cossack paths to the north. Aye, sand and crumbled shells and, in the air—gnats. And the ceaseless croaking of frogs.

But one evening we saw a thing that astonished me. The sea was a Moslem sea, and it had been so for the ages of ages. We were watching the round moon come up over the dry lakes of shining salt when Mark pointed out to the gray line of the sea where his quick eye had picked out a sail.

It was not a skiff, but a bark, and it was going north. We could hear the men in it singing with a light heart.

"That sounds like your song, Barbakosta," Mark said after he had listened.

It was so. A puff of wind brought it clearly to my ears.

> "Glorious fame will arise,
> Among the Cossacks, among the brothers,
> 'Till the end of time."

I shouted at the bark and, though they must have seen our fire, they paid no attention. The wind was blowing away from them and they did not hear. If they had heard, we might have been spared many things and less blood would have been shed on the path that lay before us.

BUT who can escape what lies before him? It was our *kismet* that we should go to Astrakhan, on the white island in the river Volga.

When we saw the gray breast of the Volga and the masts of the ships and, behind them, the wall of the town with its domes and clock towers, Mark was glad.

We could see the house of the governor within its wooden wall and the stone fortress that is the Muscovite citadel with its churches. But all the rest was Asia. The domed gray tents of Tatars, the huts of Armenians, the mud caravanserai of the Hindu traders—all these clustered like hornets' nests outside the Muscovite wall, filling the north end of the island on which the city stood. Mark was glad, and yet one thing grieved him. While we waited for the ferry barge to cross the river we saw a fleet of more than twenty sailing craft depart up the river. And every vessel was crowded with Muscovite soldiery in their black-and-white greatcoats. They were armed with arquebuses and the ships were armed with brass cannon. Flags snapped on staffs at the prows, and when they drew abreast the governor's house there was a great hullaballoo of trumpets, and a gun went off—*bang!*

Mark watched them for as long as he could, and I think he was sorry that we had not come in time for him to go on one of those boats on the expedition.

"Where are they bound for, Uncle Kosta?" he asked me.

"They go where they go, *kounak moi.*"

And I could tell him no more than that, because all around Astrakhan the steppe is like a desert—a red-and-gray desert.

And when we reached the *serai* of the Armenians, I thought no more of the fleet of boats going up the river. Mark wanted a new pair of trousers and a hat and such things before presenting himself at the governor's house and, after looking at him very shrewdly, the Armenians gave him all he wanted. They were very excited about something or other, but would say nothing at all to me. And as for understanding their talk among themselves, the devil himself can not understand Armenians when they wag their beards and toss their hands and shriek at each other.

There were some Tcherkessians around the big fire in the courtyard of the *serai* where the horses were quartered, playing their interminable fiddles and singing under their breath. They went off without a word when I began to question them, and they were not the sort to give up the fire to any one else.

So we went to sleep in the gallery above the horses, no wiser than when we came. All night the hub-bub of voices went on, quarreling all over the place, even the camels squealing and grunting, and Jewesses screeching at their men who were trying to keep out of the way of the Tcherkessians and their knives.

I was glad when morning came and the town gates opened. Mark started off through one of the gates toward the citadel and I went to the Tatar tent village to look for old friends. It had been agreed between us that he was to seek some post of employment in the garrison because we could not live in the town for long without money, and we had not a kopek between us—only the two nags.

In the steppe we got along splendidly without silver or copper, but here in Astrakhan, among our kind, we had to give money. Eh, that is how things are!

I HAD not expected to find so many Nogai Tatars still at Astrakhan, because the ice had gone out of the river and the steppe was in flower to the north, the cattle fattening up splendidly. You see the Nogais come to Astrakhan with the first snow for shelter and to escape the Kalmuks,* who hunt them down like ferrets. During the winter the governor of the town gives the Nogais arms, firelocks and such, to protect themselves against the raids of the Kalmuks, who come across when the river is frozen.

With the last of the snow the governor takes the weapons away from the Nogais so that they will not be tempted to use them against Muscovites on the steppe. But these Nogais still had firelocks, and they had sent their women and children from their *yurtas*.

Their chief, Koum Agha, was known to me and I sat down in his tent on the carpet with several other old men who were all drinking mare's milk, flavored with bitter herbs. When Koum Agha offered me a bowl of the milk, I knew that he remembered me. He was a thin warrior who shaved his head and carried it a little on one side because of a sword cut that had injured the neck muscles.

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*Kalmuks and Nogais—Tatar tribes conquered a hundred years previous by Ivan the Terrible; now furnished irregular cavalry to the Muscovites.

When I had listened to the talk for a while, I understood that the Nogais were making ready for war.

"Eh, Koum," I asked, "what is upon the river?"

"*Kazaki!*"

"How, Cossacks?"

"They are upon the river, Barbakosta, and upon the steppe like the fire that springs up with the night."

It was nothing particularly new for the Nogais to have a quarrel with my people, and I asked what leader they were going against, thinking that horses had been stolen on one side or the other.

"*Khaghan Kazaki,* Stenka Razin."

The chief of the Cossacks, Stenka Razin! Three years ago I had been in the bazaar of Astrakhan and I had seen Razin, the little father, the nourisher. *Ekh,* a tall man with dark eyes, his face pitted with smallpox scars, his *svitka* pure white ermine, strings of pearls wound around his *kalpak,* his sword hilt gleaming with diamonds. Wherever he went a crowd gathered, and at times he tossed handfuls of gold coins to the children.

He had despoiled a Persian city, and he cast away his riches so that every one could be jolly. He was a pirate, and he had the gift of holding the love of men. They brought him their woes and he laughed, saying—

"Come with me!"

But I did not see what quarrel the Tatars could have with Stenka Razin who lived on the Volga and the sea.

"He comes," Koum explained, "the great leader. He comes against Astrakhan with a horde. Tomorrow or the next day or the next he will be beating at the walls. Already he has taken Kamushink and the other *kibitkas* of the Muscovites. The steppe is afire, as I said."

"Your words are smoke, Koum Agha," I told him. "Stenka Razin has made a truce with the Muscovites."

"Unless, by God's will, a goat does not breed." He meant that all things happened only by God's will. "A truce is easily broken, Barbakosta. *Ai-iy!* This thing is true."

By then I had remembered the bark that we had seen manned by armed Cossacks and sailing toward Astrakhan, and the fleet of boats going up the river with the Muscovite soldiers. I remembered the tumult in the *serai* of the Armenians. Indeed, as the old agha said, this thing was true.

Long ago a Muscovite general had put to death Stenka Razin's brother, who was serving under his command, for slight cause. And Razin had sworn that until the day of his death he would be an enemy of the Muscovites. Men came to him then as now, and he ranged the Volga, escaping pursuit, boarding the barks of the merchants, laughing when flames soared up.

They sent armed regiments and barks with cannon from Moscow to take him and he slipped away to the Caspian to a refuge in the islands where they besieged him in vain. Eh, he was a wolf, the leader of a pack!

He descended on the Moslem shores, and the women of Kinderly and Kietu had cause to weep. With his six thousand he took the city of a sultan. But there was splendid wine in that city and, when his men were drunk, the Moslems came back and slew all but six hundred. The Muscovites did not know this and they had had their fill of his sword. They offered him peace and swore that he would not be molested and his men would be pardoned.

He accepted the truce and came to Astrakhan, laughing, as I have said, with his handful of followers, clad like princes. *Ekh moi.* They gave a pearl for a glass of brandy and the Jews waxed wealthy overnight. Even the Frankish merchants crowded around the Cossacks to buy a silk carpet for a few kopeks or a gold chain for a cask of mead.

When they found out that his band was no more than these few, they began to think. When they thought that he was stripped of his power at last, they became imperious, saying that he must command all his followers to enter Astrakhan and not leave it. And this thing he did, though not as they had desired.

"If you so love fire and the sword," he said to their envoys, "I will make you glad."

With that he went away into the steppe, and men rode from far places to join him until he had an army again. Astrakhan was cut off from the northern world and, as Koum Agha said, the steppe was his. In this way he fetched all his followers to Astrakhan as the governor had commanded!

"And you, Koum Agha," I asked. "What will you do?"

"*Tchoulbim padishah,*" he responded. "We are servants of the emperor."

"You did not go in the boats."

"Fire is for the hearth, water for the bowl."

By this he meant that the Nogais were not accustomed to fighting in boats as the Cossacks were, and I asked if he had heard how the flotilla had fared against Stenka Razin. The Tatars have a way of finding out what is happening on the steppe before any one else knows, and that was why I had come to his tent.

"God is one!" he said with conviction, and I waited until afternoon when riders came to the tents and there was swift talk among the Tatars. It was then the hour of sunset.

Finally Koum took me aside and clicked his teeth, shaking his head to show that he was troubled.

"Go away from the tents, Barbakosta. The town is not a good place for you. The boats of the Muscovites have all been eaten by your *Kazak Khaghan*."

So Stenka Razin had got the better of the fleet!

"Was it a great fight?" I asked.

"*Yok!* Nay, a very little fight. Only the Muscovite officers were slain, and by their own men who went over to your chieftain." Again he shook his head moodily. "*Ai-iy!* I see wolves, full fed. I see vultures gathering in the sky, and the earth red with blood. Go now, Barbakosta."

BUT I did not want to go without Mark, and he was somewhere within the Muscovite city. I hurried, because the ten gates of Astrakhan are always closed when it is dark.

A strong body of horsemen were coming out of the Motsagolski gate near the Tatar tents, and these were Tcherkessians, riding fine Kipchak and Kabarda ponies, clashing cymbals and kettledrums as they came to make their rounds of the island. They ride well, the Tcherkessians, and these were pleased with themselves. But I knew they were not the fellows to stand a charge or to drive one home—

It was not pleasant in the narrow streets, with women hanging out of the upper windows and the smells of many kinds of greasy cooking arising from the doors and the dogs snarling among the piles of refuse. Only overhead where the glow was leaving the sky, the stars began to shine down, bright and warm. So it was in the quarter of the Tcherkessian women—courtesans if ever women were—only the smells were of musk and mastic and fruit. Here and there one of the beauties opened a screen casement to look at me, but they mocked my sheepskins when they saw I was not an officer.

They had big, dark eyes and white skins and small mouths. They needed no paint to make them shine—those tall, supple women with hair like ripe straw. I saw more than one Muscovite underofficer going in their doors to eat dinner, but I did not see Mark. Nor was he in the wide central place called the bazaar street, where a mob of people moved around in groups and lanterns bobbed in and out like glow flies on the steppe. Aye, here were Hindu turbans and the small velvet caps of Kitayans* among the merchants closing up their stalls.

When the dark angel, Gabriel, blows his horn, some men will be found bartering goods, and when the dead of all the ages come out of their graves, a Jew or an Armenian will still be sitting on a carpet, testing a *dinar* with his teeth to see if it is a sound coin.

Then I remembered that Mark had gone to the governor's house, and thither I went, too, through rows of barracks where many soldiers were gathered around fires, through a palisade gate, into a grove of tall poplars and so to a square wooden building with a double-headed eagle painted over the door and two halberdiers standing guard. I went where the shadows were deepest because those who saw me shouted evilly, and I knew that a Cossack with a gun was not a welcome sight within government grounds.

At the edge of the trees I hid behind bushes and watched for a long time all that went on within the house. It shone with candles, and many people were eating dinner at a long table, waited on by serfs with iron collars about their necks. By and by some ladies came out of the door wearing enormous puffed-out skirts and Turkish shawls, and the officers bowed them to the sedan chairs that were in waiting under the poplars.

I looked chiefly at the officers, and they seemed to have come from different parts of Frankistan, and were all very gay. Muscovite lords, too, appeared at the windows, and I heard later that many of these had fled from their estates up the river to the protection of the governor at Astrakhan.

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*Chinese.

More candles were brought, and they began to play at cards and chess, and I grew more and more impatient because the night was wearing on and Mark was not to be seen.

Then he came out with a gray-haired colonel who wore a breast-plate and a wide sash and long boots. This, Mark explained to me afterward, was a Roundhead. By this he meant an English *kwajahbahadur* or praying soldier who had rebelled against his king and had to fly from the country. Iron-sides was another name for him.

They headed through the grove and I joined them, bowing so that the colonel should think I was a servant and whispering to Mark what I had heard from Koum Agha.

"Eh, Uncle Kosta—" he shook his head—"his excellency, the governor has had no news from the flotilla."

By this I knew that Mark had been told about the war with the Cossacks and the coming of Stenka Razin.

"The Armenian are flying down the river in boats," I pointed out. "The Nogais are of two minds what to do. It is true."

Not by words can you tell when a thing is true. *Ekh moi*, if birds fly up in fright from a thicket, is not an animal stirring in the brush?

Mark looked at me.

"How could such a well equipped fleet be wiped out by pirates, Uncle Kosta? Why did you not bring the word to the governor at once?"

"Because by dawn we must mount and ride from this place. If I had gone braying to the Muscovite princes, they would have asked questions and shut me up in a room."

Then Mark spoke to the colonel, and the praying Englishman swore under his breath unhappily.

"We are not leaving Astrakhan, Uncle Kosta," my *kounak* then said to me. "I have volunteered to serve in the defense of the town."

That was like a saber cut on the head! I could think of nothing to say until we reached Mark's new quarters—the colonel going back at once to bear the report to the governor—in a clay house near the barracks. Again I urged him to come with me to the steppe, and he said that I was free to go, but he had given his word to stay with the Muscovites.

It is true that I was not a follower of Stenka Razin, but I was not at ease in Astrakhan. Koum Agha had given me good advice. But how could I leave Mark, my *kounak?* He had talked with his countrymen and had eaten bread and wine with them, and his heart was uplifted. He smiled and said he would appoint me a sergeant of artillery, since he had now a hundred men and many guns under his orders.

"Good!" I said at last. "We will remain in this place. It was written. But I would rather pare the devil's hoofs than be one of the Muscovite soldiery. Let me be your servant. Otherwise they will hang me later because I am a Cossack."

SO I stayed in the hut the next morning, sweeping it out and tending the fire in the stove like a serf. Again I prayed Mark to go away with me, but he would not, going off instead to drill his men at the guns. He gave me some silver to take to the Armenians to make payment for his new clothes, and I went with a heavy heart.

Not an Armenian remained in the *serai* except some that had been knifed during the night by Moslems.

Eh, it was truly as if a steppe fire had been sweeping down on us, fanned by a whirlwind! Such a fire as drives all the steppe dwellers into flight before it—the little red foxes, the marmots out of their holes, the wolf pack and antelope taking no heed of each other, and even the *bougdy*, the great, gray, long-horned steer, master of the wild herd, lord of the plains.

The foreign merchants, many of them, and all Tcherkessians who were not penned within the garrison, were crowding into boats. They were lugging along bales and women, and the women were lugging brats and pitchers and bundles on their heads. Every other minute a bark would hoist sail and begin to move down the river toward the sea. And some of the skiffs were so crowded that the sailors were dipping water out in pails when the waves splashed over the sides.

If they had known what was awaiting them on the sea down below, they would have stayed with us.

But they had heard that morning of the rebellion of the soldiers that had been sent against Stenka Razin in the fleet, and they were mad with fear. I saw a Jew, watering at the mouth, running down to the shore, clad only in his long cap and half a sheepskin and carrying his own weight in rolls of silk, snatched up from —— knows where. A Muscovite guard shouted at him and pricked him with a spear, and he dropped the silk and began to weep because he could not carry it away with him. Then he feared that he would be left on the shore, and waded into the water. He could not swim, and an oar hit him on the head, so that he was not to be seen any more.

Then the same Muscovite pikeman came up to me with some soldiers and said I was a spy because I had been standing on the shore watching what went on.

"Bind the dog of a Cossack," he ordered.

I gave him the silver that had been meant for the Armenians, and they let me off because they wanted to go to a tavern and drink brandy. Eh, they had not been paid for a year, and had nothing but beer and watery vodka to drink.

"Don't hang around here, Uncle," they said. "You will be flayed. Go across the river to your mates."

Instead of that, I doubled back through the gate of St. Nicholas, intending to find my hut and stay in it like a bear in his snow shelter when winter is on the steppe.

Nay, the narrow streets were full of eyes, and men who, the day before, had passed me with a friendly word, now took occasion to cry after me to show their zeal for the Muscovite cause. A patrol of riders, black-faced Kalmuks with spears slung across their shoulders, heard the cries and closed around me, taking me to the poplar grove where others of their tribe had brought one of Razin's boys, a prisoner.

He was a young Zaporoghian, as I knew by the long scalp lock and the wide Turkish trousers. He had been tortured a little in the hands and arms, and was hot with fever.

"Brother, Cossack," he cried, "give me brandy! By ——, the Kalmuks, the sons of dogs, are going to cut the skin off me."

The tribesmen had nailed a small beam athwart the tree and had bound his bleeding arms to this cross-piece and his ankles to the trunk of the poplar. They tied me to a tree just opposite him, not on a cross, but sitting on the earth, my back against the trunk, saying:

"*Agha chapir!* Be seated, your excellency!"

When they told me that the *Khaghan karaüli,* the governor, had ordered all Cossacks found within the walls to be tortured, I knew that there was little hope for the Zaporoghian or for me. The young warrior cried out again for spirits to help him endure the torments. A throng of Muscovite soldiers off duty and townspeople had come into the grove to watch, but no one brought a pitcher of brandy. Aye, there were ladies at the back of the crowd, leaning on the arms of gentlemen merchants.

When the Kalmuks took off the Zaporoghian's boots and began to strip the skin from his instep with their long knives these ladies screamed and put their fans before their faces. One of them fainted, but the others did not go away. It was hard to understand.

The Zaporoghian warrior had a horned soul in him. The pain did not make him whine.

"When Stenka Razin comes, you will remember me," he shouted at the watchers. "The little father will make a torch out of your town. Death to you, dog brothers!"

Some of the Muscovite soldiers went away, murmuring when the tribesmen reached the Zaporoghian's ankles. The Kalmuks relished their work, and the sight was not a pretty one. If only I had had some silver or a weapon! But I had left all in the hut because I was playing the part of a servant.

And when the Kalmuks had finished with the Zaporoghian, they would begin with me. I called to the Muscovites, saying that I was the servant of an officer of the governor's, and they gave me only kicks for an answer. Mark had come to Astrakhan only the day before and his face was not known in the city.

So no one went to seek him, and after a while I grew ashamed of shouting when the Zaporoghian was dying without a groan. If it was written that I should be flayed alive by Kalmuks in this place, how could it be otherwise? And after all, Mark was no more than a wanderer from the sea who had taken service with the Muscovites. How was he to countermand an order of the governor?

But it was not written that I should die then. There was a stir in the crowd and Mark pushed his stocky form through the inner ring. Eh, it was a joyful thing to see his broad, lined face and his big boots that flopped when he walked. Another officer was with him—a young ensign who wore a fine new uniform of white damask, the breastplate silvered and the iron head-piece crested with plumes. Mark had seen me tied to the tree when he was inspecting the palisade gate, and had come to investigate.

WHEN he saw the Zaporoghian, he started, and the ensign grew white all at once in the face. Then Mark pointed to me and spoke to the young Muscovite, who shrugged his shoulders and gave an order to the Kalmuks, and they cast off my cords and set me free.

"Eh, Mark," I told him, "that poor devil on the tree wants brandy to help him out of his skin. Have you any more money?"

Mark turned to the ensign and they talked in a language I did not know. I learned afterward that Mark conversed with the Muscovite officers in French, a dialect of *Frankistan* that is well known in the northern cities. And I learned, too, what passed between him and the ensign.

First, Mark asked why the prisoner was being tortured, and the ensign said it was by order of the governor who wished to teach the rebels a lesson.

"His own men may profit more by the lesson than the Cossacks," Mark pointed out. And it happened that the tormenting of the young warrior did stir up uncertainty among the soldiers of the garrison. Because they knew that Stenka Razin would hear of it and, when he did, every Muscovite in Astrakhan might have reason to regret his mother had given him birth.

"An order," said the ensign, "is an order."

Mark asked if the order was that the Zaporoghian should be killed, and the ensign said this was so. Then Mark took a long pistol from his belt and powdered the pan without pointing the muzzle at any one. Turning suddenly on his heel, he raised the pistol and fired and the Zaporoghian's head dropped at once on his chest. He had been shot through the brain, but so great had been his suffering that the sweat still ran from his mustaches and chin, although he was dead in a few seconds.

"Now," Mark assured the ensign, "the savages can skin the prisoner."

The crowd went away, and the ensign and the Kalmuks looked bewildered, but it could not be said that Mark had countermanded the order.

WORD of what he had done was taken to the governor's house and, before long a Polish colonel came to us on the ramparts—from that time a flea did not stick to a dog as close as I did to my *kounak*, Mark—and began to blow out his cheeks and talk angrily.

He had a red face, that colonel, and a fine *kaftan*, embroidered with gold thread and a splendid ivory baton. He was so fat that he panted when he climbed the steps to the rampart, yet he was the officer commanding the garrison. A group of underofficers walked behind him and, whenever the colonel would speak, one of them would come forward and bow and smile. When the Polish colonel frowned at Mark, they all scowled and fingered their mustaches.

"Eh, Lieutenant—" this is what I heard of the colonel's talk from a cannoneer—"it has been reported to me that you have changed the loading of the guns. As you are a civilian without experience in the arts of war, you have not known better than to put wadding in upon the powder without balls. It is reported to me that you have done so, or perhaps have put the wadding behind the powder charge and the ball, which amounts to the same thing."

Ekh moi! What had happened was that some soldiers had related how Mark had put the prisoner out of pain and others had repeated that he sympathized with the Cossacks, and the people in the governor's house had passed on the story that Mark was a traitor who, no doubt, was charging the guns so they would not go off. And the colonel had heard that Mark had changed the charges in the cannon. That is how a rumor grows in such times!

As for Mark, he did not look at all uneasy or angry. He asked the colonel's permission to discharge one of the guns and the colonel agreed. So a slow match was brought and Mark himself trained the gun-carriage to bear on a sand-bar in the middle of the river. Then the match was touched to the breech and there was a great roar and billows of smoke, and the sand out on the shallows sprang up like mad.

They all saw that nothing was wrong with the charge; but Mark went on to the next cannon, and the fat colonel had to go with him to each gun until all were fired off.

The Polish colonel grunted, and looked at Mark a long time. Then he swore at the underofficers and stamped off, pausing at the steps to speak under his breath to a German lieutenant who wore a black coat with red ornaments and had a habit of brushing his mustaches to make them stand up like bristles instead of hanging down as God ordained.

This lieutenant waited until the Pole and his staff had disappeared, then he walked up to where Mark was showing his men how to load the guns quickly. Mark was not sitting on the stove any longer. He showed the Muscovites himself just how everything was done, and then the lunkheads would get matters mixed. They were surly and slow, and I saw that Mark was studying them as he explained things through a sergeant who acted as interpreter. He was very patient and, before that morning had ended, the Muscovites had learned that they must do what he said, swiftly, without muddling. For four hours he made them load and draw the charges from the guns, and they were very weary. I think they expected to be flogged, but Mark had his own way of doing things.

This had not pleased the German, who only watched a few minutes before he took his stand where he was in the way of the cannoneers.

"Please to stand aside, *barin*," the sergeant urged.

"I am on duty," replied the German who was called a Walloon, rumbling in his throat and brushing up his bristles. "The *hochwohlgeborener*, the high well-born, has said that this is not the time for adventurers to seek promotion in the garrison."

He meant the fat colonel, and he intended to cast a slur at Mark. Now Mark had told his name to the governor and favor had been shown him, so the foreign officers of the garrison were jealous of him. And the Muscovite officers were sulking because the governor had given the important posts of command to the foreigners. He trusted them more than he did the Muscovites.

"It is a time," repeated the lieutenant, "when we should think only of the defense of the city, not of personal advancement by intrigue."

And he looked hard at Mark, who had taken off his coat and was working in his shirtsleeves among the men.

"Stand back, Rudolph," he said. "You are in the way."

The men began to look up from their tasks, and the drill came to a stop. The eyes of the lieutenant, Rudolph, began to glitter and he put a gloved hand on the hilt of his long rapier.

"My dear sir, do not shout at me. I am on duty."

Mark had not raised his voice to the officer, and now he made a fine bow.

"My dear lieutenant," he whispered, "kindly go to the ——."

"*Achtingkristl*" roared Rudolph. "You threaten me? We will have a word or two about that. We will have a meeting, Master Nameless, before night. Will you choose rapiers or barkers, sir?"

It was all plainly to be seen. The Polish colonel and the Dutch and German officers disliked Mark, who had only the English colonel for his friend. They had selected the man Rudolph to quarrel with him so that a duel would be fought. It seems that Rudolph was a good man with weapons, a veteran of a great war that they called the War of Thirty Years in *Frankistan*. Nor did he lack courage. Like a boar, he bristled and roared.

Mark looked at him intently for a moment, and his gray eyes twinkled.

"Sir," he said gravely, "is not this a time when we should think only of the defense of the city, not of personal quarrels, especially of intrigue? Astrakhan, I fear me, would be lost without Lieutenant Rudolph."

The Walloon brushed up his mustaches fiercely and opened his mouth twice to reply, without finding words. Then he remembered his mission.

"*Akh*, I understand." He scowled and rumbled again in his throat. "You lack courage. In short, sir, you are a coward."

And he turned his back to await Mark's reply.

But Mark was engaged in teaching his men again. He had seen through the lieutenant with the eyes of his mind, and wasted no more words on him except to send the sergeant who acted as interpreter after Rudolph to remind him that when the siege was over, he would be at his service, and that he preferred pistols to swords.

I had seen Mark turn on his heel and fire a bullet into the brain of the Cossack prisoner, twenty paces away, and I knew that he was a match for the man called Rudolph. That evening at dinner, the governor, who was a just man, explained to the officers that Mark had refused a commission in the emperor's service.

The governor was very polite to Mark, and when the other officers learned that he had seen service in America, they became civil, and the Polish colonel urged him again to accept a lieutenant's commission. But Mark would not and in the end this was a good thing.

Many bottles were opened at the table, and all were in good spirits. That afternoon they had seen Stenka Razin's fleet.

IT CAME, the Cossack fleet, sailing down the Volga, with the men singing and the minstrels playing. Aye, it was a strange attack. I counted fifty-two vessels and about seven thousand warriors.

When we expected them to land below us on the island, they turned and rowed back around a bend in the river. They came so near we could hear their laughter and the words of their song. They were big men, some in rags, some in Persian finery.

The governor and his officers did not know what to make of this. Some said Stenka Razin had lost heart when the moment came to attack the shore; others believed that he wanted to scout around the city. But all agreed that he had gone off without trying to get a foothold anywhere.

Then the governor asked for advice, and they held a council when the ladies had left the table, as on the previous evening. Some of the Muscovite women were dark-browed and beautiful, but all were painted red and white, and this is not the way of our Cossack maids.

The Polish colonel was all for crossing to the mainland and moving to attack Razin with the Tcherkessians and the Tatars, saying that we had nine thousand Muscovite infantry, as many hundred Poles and Swedes and four thousand native cavalry. But the governor said his duty was to defend the city, and we did not know where to find Razin and his men.

To this the Muscovite officers assented, but insisted that the Nogais should be sent to harass Razin.

When Mark was asked his opinion, he said that he had just come to Astrakhan and knew little of the situation, but it seemed to him that the governor should offer amnesty to all who had joined the Cossacks and forgiveness for past offences to make sure of those who were wavering between him and Razin.

All except the Roundhead English colonel shook their heads, and the young ensign, who shone like a bride in his new uniform, swore that he would rather die than lower himself to treat with pirates.

So the governor did nothing, except a little of many things. He did not advance on the Cossacks, but he sent the Nogais, and Koum Agha vanished like a bat into the night and was not seen again. Nay, he fled into the steppe, as I would have done in his place. And the governor issued casks of *tabak* and mead to the garrison and promised them a month's pay—who had not seen a kopek for a year. Surely the kopeks had gone into the governor's wallet, because the feast that night was a great feast. The table was covered with gold and silver plate, and the serving knaves carried stuffed quail and sturgeon and mutton in great platters.

And at the end of the feast came two envoys from Stenka Razin—a gray-haired *ataman* and a priest.

They offered the governor the lives of all within Astrakhan if he would surrender to Stenka Razin.

Now the governor was no coward; he was bold enough, and foolish. Pride made him foolish. He hung the Cossack colonel to a tree and cut off the head of the little father, the priest.

But I did not see this. Mark and the English colonel were walking on the wall, inspecting all things and moving their regiment to the south side of the town, which was the weakest because it faced the length of the island. See—the island is long and covered in places with woods. Without this south side of the city wall are the quarters of the Armenians and the others. On the other three sides the wall presses close to the river, within pistol shot of the shore.

And here at the end is the governor's house where it overlooks the river to the north.

Mark and the Roundhead agreed that the city with its high stone wall and great towers could stand off an attack by a hundred thousand men. The cannon of the Muscovites were splendid, shooting balls as big as a man's head, and there was powder enough to last for years. If Stenka Razin's boats approached the shore they would be blown out of the water. If he landed below Astrakhan and tried to storm the south wall he would be advancing up a narrow strip of land under heavy fire. His cannon were small brass falconets, firing a ball no bigger than a man's fist. Such cannon could not make a breach in our wall.

And Stenka Razin's followers were not as many as the soldiers of the garrison.

"What do you think, Uncle Kosta," Mark asked, "of the Muscovite soldiery? Will they stand?"

"Eh, *kounak*," I said, "the Muscovite is like no other man. It is hard to make him angry, but when he is angry it is just as hard to make him laugh again. They will grumble for ten days, then they will rebel if God wills. If Stenka Razin had attacked this afternoon they would have fired off the guns and stirred up their blood. Then they would have fought well enough behind a wall. As it is, I do not know. The governor has been a hard master."

This Mark repeated to the Roundhead colonel, who shrugged his shoulders.

"If the men do turn against us, God help the women!"

They both glanced back at the governor's great house where the Muscovite noblewomen were all quartered. The officers in the banquet hall had fetched in some gipsies, and a likely looking lass was dancing the *chapak* for them on the long table, while Rudolph and the Polish colonel were beating time with their swords.

"Listen, effendi," I said to Mark.

Somewhere in the town men were singing.

"In years gone by,
Trai-rai-ta-ra-tai!
The peasant was a huntsman.
Trai-rai-ra-ta-tai!"

And then, as if some devil in the air had drawn a shroud over everything, the damp river mist drifted up and settled around the wall, hiding the lights in the great house, the watch fires and even changing the moon into a round silvery lantern

"LISTEN, effendi!"

It was late, late when I warned Mark thus for the second time. The round lantern of the moon was a lantern no longer; only a spot of silver in the mist. The camp fires were embers. Only the government house blazed with candles.

Bending over the wall, I heard jackals yelping down by the shore and the hooting of an owl in the shadows of the Armenian *serai*. By and by wolves began howling down the island.

Mark and the Roundhead colonel looked at me, and after a moment they remembered what I knew very well, that there were no wolves or jackals on the island.

"What is it, Barbakosta?"

When I heard the keels of boats grating on the small stones of the shore—my ears are sharp, like a dog's, to hear sounds at night—and the trampling of heavy feet in the Tatar town, I went close to them and whispered.

"Effendi, it is death."

Mark, too, had heard the sounds of men moving in the mist, and he became aware that the Muscovite sentries were not giving the alarm. Sentries? The Tcherkessians should have been watching the shore and we had outposts in the Tatar town. The yelping of jackals had been the Cossacks of Stenka Razin calling to scouts who had gone ahead to talk to the Muscovite soldiers in the outposts, and the hooting of the owl was the reply.

The Cossacks were coming up from their boats to the wall of Astrakhan. Eh, had I not gone with them in their skiffs when I was a boy to steal horses from the *aüls* along the Persian shore? That was how they did things. I wanted to go down with Mark to a small postern door beside the great Motsagolski gate, so that we could hear them talking and find out where they would attack, but the officers had no thought except to muster their men. It seemed as if the Cossacks were moving toward the Vosnasinski gate where the Roundhead colonel had his headquarters, and he went off in that direction.

Mark went up to the nearest sentry who was leaning over the parapet, listening with all his ears. He ordered the man to fire off his gun, and the sentry jumped as if some one had stuck a knife in him—jumped and ran off, dropping his firelock. This Mark picked up, pulling the trigger. It only sparked and clicked, as the powder had fallen out of the pan.

Then Mark said something softly and called the sergeant who acted as interpreter, and the man ran up at once, although he had been off duty.

"Bring a slow match!" Mark ordered, and the Muscovite bawled out loud for a light.

None came, and it appeared that the cannoneers had let the matches go out. Then my *kounak* drew his sword and spoke very quietly to the sergeant, and the man began to bow as if had been frightened to the soul, which was indeed the case. He went off to fetch embers from the nearest fire, and Mark went among the groups of cannoneers, lashing them with his tongue in slave galley Turkish that many of them understood. Eh, he said things! Those who did not understand, saw his sword, and by degrees they began to take their stations.

The thought came to me of my firelock in the hut within the governor's palisade. It was time that I had a weapon.

"Eh, Mark," I whispered when I could get his attention, "these sons of jackals are not to be trusted. Leave them and come with me."

But he would not. And still no trumpet had blared the alarm. As I ran down the steps on the wall I heard steel clashing faintly over toward the Vosnasinski gate. Mark had told me to warn the governor's people that Cossacks were afoot on the island. Of this, however, there was no need because I had not gone half way to the hut when one of his cannon went off with a roar, and I knew that the sergeant had brought the fire.

Other cannon began to talk, and I thought that now the Muscovites would show fight if their officers knew how to handle them.

"*Matier Boga molis zanas!*" I cried. "Holy Lady, pray for us!"

Why did I pray that the Cossacks be driven away? Well, I was alive and Mark was alive; yet if the men of Stenka Razin found us fighting among the Muscovites, we would be cut open like rabbits in a wolf pack. I knew this as well as I knew that I was standing in my own boots. Because then I had seen the head!

An old man's head, the forehead bald, the long white hair clotted under the chin and dripping red. Instead of a body under it, the head had a staff and the staff was a spear, stuck into the ground, and the head had belonged to a Cossack priest—the one Razin had sent as envoy to the governor of the Muscovites. It peered at me, the eyes wide open under the poplar trees.

Ekh moi! When I had my gun I ran back very fast toward the Motsagolski gate toward Mark. As I passed the barracks the white ensign was trying to muster his company in line, first pleading with them, then threatening. The soldiers in their dark coats were shuffling their feet and looking all around at the officer and at the flashes of the cannon on the wall. They were like cattle in a herd when a solitary wolf is scented near at hand. The beasts toss their heads and move together, not knowing whether to stand their ground with the monarch steer or to flee.

All at once one of the men levelled his gun and shot the ensign, who fell to his knees. As soon as this happened, a dozen ran up and let off their guns into his body. When I could no longer see the fine white uniform, I ran on until a man in a breastplate stumbled against me within an alley, black as the pit itself.

He called out, and it was the voice of the Roundhead colonel.

"Are you hurt?" I asked, because his knees were wavering strangely.

"Barbakosta!" he groaned.

A candle flared up in a window above us and his face became visible. He had been badly hacked in the hand and across the forehead. I thought of the ringing of steel I had heard near his post on the wall. He cried out something several times, but how was I to understand?

Wrenching a long piece of white linen from his shirt at the throat with his good hand, he plucked one of my daggers from my girdle. Dipping the point in his own blood at the wrist he traced two words on the linen and handed it to me. Then he gave me a push toward the wall. What was I to do?

He was too heavy to carry, and his wounds made him weak very quickly. With a sigh he looked around and went to sit down on the threshold of the house where the candle burned.

Eh, he did not lack courage, that gray colonel. Again he waved me off and I went, thrusting the strip of cloth into my girdle.

At the wall Mark's men were serving the cannon, but it was apparent that no other cannon were being fired. And we were not long in learning the reason. Two officers, the Walloon Rudolph and a Muscovite lieutenant, ran up to Mark's place on the wall and urged him to come with them to the governor's house.

Their men had mutinied, and when Mark would not go, they asked what they should do.

He said—I asked the sergeant what his words were—that he must stay at his post of command as long as the guns could be served and, as for them, they had better bring their men to order.

"The Cossacks have entered the Vosnasinski gate," they said.

When Mark shrugged his shoulders they started off, but not along the wall. They began to run toward the governor's house when they were clear of the wall, and in the end it did them no good. Just then I heard singing from the streets behind us, and I knew well that song.

"From the White Island
  On the Mother Volga,
Stenka Razin's brothers
  Sail with a merry song."

Between the reports of Mark's guns laughter came from the darkness in front of us—roaring, drunken laughter. And the song was taken up somewhere to our left in the Tatar town.

"Stenka Razin's the captain,
  The black devil's the admiral—
Sing a song princess,
  For we are merry today."

The sergeant began to tear at his head, crying out that cannon balls and steel could not harm our foes. Aye, it fairly made my skin creep to hear those roaring voices out of the mist almost under the muzzles of our guns. And when the sergeant cried out, the men all stood still and looked at Mark. The guns ceased speaking, and Mark took his sword tip in his left hand, the muscles on his chin standing out, his gray eyes glittering.

"Red wine and jewels,
  Dark blood and fire—
Hi, Stenka Razin, our father:
  Sarin na kitchkou!"

This was the rallying cry of the Volga brothers, the children of Stenka Razin, and when they heard it, the Muscovites looked unhappy, scowling at Mark. I moved to stand between him and the outer parapet, slinging my gun over one shoulder to free my hands. Then I pushed him off the inner wall.

Beneath him were a flight of steps, leading into a tower. He fell, but his feet were under him and he leaped down the steps with me on his shoulders. Before he could gain his balance I had thrust him through the tower door and slammed it shut behind us, setting the bars in place.

"*Kounak moi,*" I said into the darkness where he was breathing heavily. "No doubt you would like to stick old Uncle Kosta with your sword. Very well, go ahead. My hands are open, but I will not return up yonder to be pulled into pieces by the Muscovite pack."

He was silent for the time it takes to empty a flagon of brandy. Then he laughed.

"*Shabash!*" Which means well done or the work is over. "What now?"

I explained that at the foot of the tower there was the postern door. This would let us out into the Tatar town, and in the mist we could easily escape notice by the Cossacks until we had gained the shore where we could steal a skiff and go over to the mainland. If we were challenged, I could answer that we were wounded Cossacks going back to the ships. Our horses were lost to us, of course, but at that moment our skins were the things to think about.

Two soldiers had been posted in the lower tower; I did not hear them, and they had probably run away. Our friends, the cannoneers were pounding on the door beside us before Mark agreed to my plan.

Cautiously we descended the winding stair until we saw the glow of a lantern below, and then we stopped short like dead men. The two sentries were not there. A young woman was standing holding the lantern, looking up at us wide-eyed, and the long pistol in her other hand was pointed at me.

"——!" shouted Mark.

SHE was in truth a strange girl. She was thinner than the Cossack maids, too young to have reached the years of wisdom. Her whole body was wrapped in a gray cloak, a white collar covering throat and shoulders. The hood of the cloak did not hide bright tresses of hair like sun-bleached grain.

Aye, she looked like a nun from a holy convent in that strange garment of gray and white. Yet, when Mark cried out, she lowered the pistol and answered him. Now her voice trembled, but her hand had been steady enough. I could not understand their words which came bursting out swiftly. By these very words I knew she must be a woman of Mark's tribe in *Frankistan.** She was a beautiful child, altogether fair and clean.

Mark went down the remaining steps three at a time and put up the bars on the door that opened into the city street. Then he looked at me, his broad face twisted by a kind of excited grief.

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*Europe—the western world in general.

"Barbakosta," he said. "This is the niece of the Roundhead colonel. She came to seek him and took shelter in this place when she heard the singing in the streets. I am going to find Colonel Bailly."

"If that is the name of the Roundhead," I answered, remembering the bit of linen that had escaped my mind until then, "you would not find him in this world. Here is what he gave me. Is it meant for you?"

He took the white strip with its red lettering and turned his back so the girl would not see. I think the writing was about her because Mark only said when he had crumpled it up in his hand—

"Aye, Uncle Kosta, it was meant for me."

He spoke quietly to the girl who stood looking at him without a word. The noises around the tower seemed to bewilder her and she took his arm in such a way that I saw she did not mean to let it go in a hurry.

Then he blew out the lantern and ordered me to open the postern, saying that they would follow me down to the shore. *Ekh moi*, I had got Mark away from the traitors, his men. But I knew I could not make him leave the blue-eyed lass. Here we had been on the point of escaping without a scratched skin, and now we had a woman to take through Stenka Razin's pirates!

No time was to be lost, and I merely said to myself—

"Old Konstantine, you may lose your skin if that is your *kismet*."

And I opened the door. It would have availed more if I had said a prayer. A torrent of Cossacks poured in on us, slashing with their swords, crying—

"*Von sabliouky—smiert!* Use your blades —death!"

Aye death was upon us then. I was knocked back upon the steps, and from that place I could see Mark's form against a distant glow of torches. He had pushed the girl behind him and was using his blade in truth. Two of the leaders he put down, and was thrust back against the far wall by others, who howled when they saw their comrades cut open.

I could hear the cannoneers shouting at them from the wall above the postern, and the thought came to me that the Muscovite sons of dogs had warned the Cossacks that an officer was trying to escape through the postern. If it had not been for the Frankish girl, we might have gone free.

Drawing two daggers, I ran into the stumbling warriors and slashed them at the girdles. Eh, in the darkness two daggers are worth twice two swords. A big man struck me with his fist, and the darkness became red light before my eyes so that I could no longer see him and expected to be cut down at once.

A pistol roared behind my ear, and I heard him fall. Aye, the girl in the gray cloak had fired that pistol, but it did us little good. Mark's sword was broken, and three of the Cossacks, heavy men in damp sheepskins, grappled me. We went down in a mass, all of us.

Then some one cried for a torch and, when the light came, we were jerked to our feet and sabers were swung up to make an end of us.

"By the ascension of Mahomet!" roared one of them. "Here is a lass, such a lass!"

They began to stare at us, and when they discovered that I was a Cossack and Mark a foreign officer and the girl something altogether strange, they scratched their heads and decided to take us to Stenka Razin.

AI-A, have you ever seen the *bougây*, the great wild steer of the steppes? Have you seen him, the master of the herd, standing on a knoll around which the other cattle are feeding?

He does not move his massive weight, his red eyes scan you as you approach, and you wonder what is in his mind or if he has a mind and, while you wonder, you feel afraid.

Just so did Stenka Razin sit among his colonels the next day when we were brought before him in the poplar grove. He was the master, the little father, and the Cossacks were his children and the prisoners were his slaves. I said to myself—

"Old Konstantine, yesterday the Muscovites were going to skin you alive in this very grove, but God alone knows what will happen to you today!"

For a Don Cossack, Stenka Razin was sizable, rather heavy. As tall as I—six feet and eight inches—he must have weighed two hundred and twenty pounds. Sprawled in an arm-chair, he sat in a fine red satin shirt, spotted down the front with spilled wine; his wide green nankeen trousers were stained with tar; the hilt of his sword was Venetian work, set with many shining diamonds. The black lambskin hat on the table beside him gleamed with a solitary Siberian emerald as large as my thumb nail.

"What sign is that on his arm?" Mark asked me in a whisper.

"An evil sign," I replied, "for us."

It was a thing like a diamond, burned into the skin, with one word printed within the diamond—*Cain.* In this way the Muscovites had branded him when he was a youth and they had taken him prisoner when one of them said he had stolen a horse. I do not know whether he stole the horse, but I know that he was branded and spent the ten years that were the prime of his life in the prison at Kazan. Since then he had sworn an oath that the Muscovites would not take him alive again.

Now he had rolled up the sleeve on that arm so that all the Muscovites of Astrakhan who were brought before him could see the mark and the word. Truly Cain once slew his brother, who was a mild man, but Stenka Razin had not slain his brother. The Muscovites had done that.

And when each of the governor's officers were set before the table, Razin looked at them and said whether they were to be thrown into the river or beheaded. None of the officers did he spare, so it was not long before Mark was led forward. Behind Mark was the young girl, Mistress Bailly, and I was last of the three.

"*Batko,*" cried the Cossack warriors at Mark's side, "Father, this is the dog of a Frank who fired on us with cannon last night."

Razin had a great, broad head. Even the skin was dark—the eyes black under drooping lids, the long beard black, and likewise the hair on his chest that showed where the shirt was loosened. Aye, it was no easy matter to face him. To see him was enough to yield, to beat to him with the forehead on the ground.

But Mark did not lower his eyes before Razin's stare and, after a moment, the Cossack chief stirred his shoulders and the chair creaked.

"What more?" he asked.

Then did Chvëdor, the priest, speak in his ringing voice—a stout man who had given up the cassock for *svitka* and saber, and who sat, tankard on knee, at the side of Razin.

"Eh, father, this Frank put an end to the torture of Melko, the Zaporoghian yonder."

Chvëdor was a bold spirit and more than once Razin had been on the point of hanging him, but the priest was merry and the pirate liked to drink with him. Now Razin glanced at the dead Cossack who rested as he had been left by the Kalmuks on the cross.

"Sit," he said to Mark, and no man could tell how he was minded to deal with my comrade.

One of the Cossacks ran up with a chair, and Mark seated himself gravely, a little apart from the chieftain.

The girl was led forward. Her hood had been pulled back on her shoulders, and the sunlight, coming through the poplar branches, gleamed in the tangle of her hair. A slim lass, flushing under the eyes of the drunken warriors. Like a lily she was, shining in rank steppe grass. So she swayed, standing before the *bougây,* the master of the steppe.

Aye, in that moment I felt grief and pity for her, the young maiden who had come from afar to the Volga and the children of Razin. I saw that she had taken the chieftain's fancy at once.

"To my *choutar,*" he said, meaning the governor's house that he called his farm.

The eyes of the girl flew to Mark and she tried to run to him, but the Cossacks checked her. Then she closed her eyes and moved away without a word. Mark leaned forward, looking at the ground between his feet, and the muscles in his hands became rigid. It was clear to me that he would not let Razin take the girl without an effort to protect her; but at the time he said nothing, and I wondered. Before very long I thought of the reason. Mark had wished Mistress Bailly to be out of sight of the Cossack when he spoke. Eh, she was very fair, and no man seeing her could fail to desire her.

Meanwhile I was led forward, hanging my head. The Cossacks who had seized us in the tower had taken my gun and coat and a fine pair of boots, and I was bare-foot.

"Father," said some one, "this is Uncle Kosta, an old dog who fought on the side of the Muscovites."

Though I looked searchingly at the throng, I could not see the man who had spoken, but presently the Muscovite mutineers began to give tongue. They had turned their coats inside out and had come to Razin on their knees, and he had given them the year's pay that was owing to them out of the coffers in the governor's house. They said that I had been the first to bring word of the loss of the flotilla; that I had been a spy of the governor's and had given the alarm the night before.

Eh, it was the Muscovite halberdier who said that, the one who had accosted me on the beach and had taken my silver for brandy money. He desired to gain the favor of Razin.

As for me, I spat on the ground toward that father of lies, and Stenka Razin moved impatiently in his chair.

"Fill Kosta's belly with sand," he said, "and throw him into Mother Volga."

The Cossacks, who had grasped my arms, were dragging me off when a voice made them stop and look around in surprize.

"*Khaghan,*" Mark had said in his slow Turkish, "are you drunk?"

Most of the Cossacks, among them Razin, understood him and some got up from their chairs to stare at him. The chieftain lifted his pitcher of white spirits and drained it to the bottom; then he turned around to face Mark.

"A devil is in you, Frank. Nay, Stenka Razin is not drunk. Are you weary of carrying your head?"

"I have eyes, and I can tell you the truth. This man, Uncle Kosta, is not a spy. He came with me, out of the steppe to the river. His home is in the mountains down below among the tribes, and he can tell you much of the Moslems and their doings. Another thing I say to you: The shah of the Persians is gathering his war vessels together and fitting them out to sail up the Volga and make war against you."

"That is a lie," Razin laughed. "The shah is afraid of my shadow. Did I not put the torch to Baku under his eyes? Did I not take the horses he sent to the white-livered emperor of the Muscovites?"

"It is the truth," said Mark quietly. "I was a prisoner on a Persian galley."

Now when my comrade said a thing, as he did then, his scarred hands folded on his knee, his gray eyes unfaltering, it was not possible to doubt him. Stenka Razin did not doubt him, but the words bred anger in the big Cossack. He grew more angry when one of his lieutenants laughed.

This was a slender man who carried his head on one side and drank only red wine. They called him Filka Tchortyaka, Filka the Devil. It was his habit to goad Razin to do mad things, and for some reason Filka had taken a dislike to Mark.

"Drunk!" echoed Razin, shaking his great head. "Well, we will see. By ——, you will drink with me, Frank, cup for cup, in equal measure. If at the end you are less steady than I, you will be put in a hogshead of vodka and touched off with a torch, pouff!"

Even at that time his victories had stirred Razin to a reckless belief in his own powers. He was master of the steppe, but he fancied himself emperor of all that part of the earth. When he was quite sober, he was all that a Cossack should be—open handed, full of frolic, eager for new doings. When he was drinking, a black devil seized him, and he had been drinking spirits all that morning. Even so, it was clearly to be seen that his Cossacks believed that Mark would be put in the hogshead.

"*Ei sokoly vina Atamanou*—hi, falcons, wine for the colonel!" they shouted, and those who had me in hand sat down to smoke their pipes and watch.

IT WAS a strange duel. At first Chvëdor drank with them—drank the spiced *varenukha* and the white, sweet-smelling corn brandy. Every time two cups would be filled evenly and one taken to Mark, one to Stenka Razin's table.

By and by Chvëdor dropped out to go off into the town and plunder a bit. The prisoners were brought in a steady stream before the *ataman*, and it is true he showed no mercy to those who had white hands. The fancy struck Stenka Razin to have the prince, the governor, thrown from the clock tower, the highest in the town, and this was done. Then he sent for wines from the governor's house, and the afternoon was not half gone before he had emptied two bottles.

"*Ataman*—" Mark had picked up this word from us—"you have said what will happen if I do not keep pace with you in this drinking. But how if I do?"

"Ask for what you want, Frank," the chieftain made answer carelessly. "It will be yours."

"Good!" said Mark, and Stenka Razin looked at him for a moment from under drooping lids.

When the shadows began to stretch along the ground under the poplars, Stenka

Razin's broad face grew darker and darker until it was purple. By some blow many of his front teeth had been broken out, and from his loose mouth trinkles of wine ran down on his shirt. Mark looked whiter and no longer said anything.

The *ataman* called for a pitcher of *gorilka* and tossed it down his throat, while Mark quaffed his slowly. Stenka Razin looked at him and grinned. Mark's head was swaying just a little from side to side, while the big Cossack was motionless as always.

"*Ekh*, my falcon," he muttered, "that last was bitter, was it not? We will have something sweet."

Throwing back his head he roared out a verse from one of the songs of Chvëdor, and Mark, thinking that this was part of the game, responded at once with his only song:

> "Blow high, blow low—what care we,
> On the coast of the high Barbaree."

"Good!" laughed Razin, pleased because my friend's head seemed to be not altogether clear. "Bring mead, sweetened with honey."

That seemed to be more than men could endure—the goblets of sweet drink. The skin on my head felt chill, and I did not dare to look at Mark. The veins were standing out on his forehead, and steam was rising from him into the damp air.

Stenka Razin rose without holding to chair or table just as the sun was setting. He pulled a pistol from his belt and spoke to my comrade.

"Now we will see who is the steadier."

The long pistol looked small in his great fist as he levelled it at the tree from which the Zaporoghian had been cut down. His shot showed clearly—a white flake where it had ripped the bark from the side of the poplar. The tree was fifty paces away. It was a wonder that he had been able to stand on his own feet, a miracle that he had hit the tree.

It is one thing to keep a quiet tongue and not to fall down when you are roaring drunk; it is quite another matter to shoot at anything with a pistol and hit what you aim at.

Mark, too, was drunk, but something within his mind was cold and clear. I think he had forgotten all about himself and me. The thing in his mind was the girl who had held out her arms to him and the bit of the old colonel's shirt inscribed with blood. He moved like a man who has been cut on the head—very slowly, doing one thing at a time.

He raised the pistol Stenka Razin handed him and fired. And the bullet struck fairly, near the center of the poplar trunk. The Cossacks raised a shout, and for a moment Razin's eyes glowed red. Then he went over and stood in front of Mark, hands on his thighs.

"*Shabash!*" he roared. "Well done!"

"Then give me the Frankish girl," Mark muttered. "She is mine."

Razin looked at him in astonishment.

"How, yours?"

"My betrothed. She is to be my wife."

Mark lied, yet he said the only thing that would have weight with Razin in such a moment.

"What is that to me?"

"Your word!"

"Well, my word is not smoke. Take the lass. She's fair, but I have a lovelier bit in my bark. By ——, you are bold. There is a horned soul in you, Mark." Razin turned to the watching Cossacks. "Look here, children. This Frank is Stenka Razin's *kounak*, his chosen friend! Do you understand?"

"Aye, father," the Cossacks cried.

"The whole world knows and the —— in purgatory knows, too, that Stenka Razin is no niggard. *Allah!* Where is that besotted priest, Chvëdor? Fetch him here, and do you, Filka, run and get the maid. We'll marry you, Mark, to the blue-eyed lass, and —— take you if you don't know how to look out for her after you are her husband."

Meanwhile my guards, who knew that I was a follower of the Frank, decided to release me.

WE SOON saw that Razin was a man of his word. Chvëdor came staggering and put a priest's embroidered chasuble over his *svitka* and took his stand behind the very table where the chieftain had been drinking. Torches were fetched, and the round lantern of the moon peered down at us between the poplars.

Filka escorted Mistress Bailly from the governor's house and all the Cossacks bowed to the girdle when she entered among them, carrying a candle. Mark went to her and they talked for some moments aside, and I do not know what they said. But the girl put her hand on his arm, and a little color came into her white cheeks.

Ekh, they had spirit in them—those two. A fine pair, Mark standing straight as a lance staff, looking every one full in the eyes, although the liquor must have been boiling in his veins; Mistress Bailly, trembling a little beneath the cloak, but outwardly indifferent to all except Chvëdor who began the ritual at once in his fine voice. Her hand was steady when she placed the candle on the table, and the flame burned bright. If it had gone out, it would have meant an evil fate for her and my comrade.

We Cossacks all watched the candle, and it did not go out.

"Christ be with you, my children," said the pirate priest at the end.

He knew the ritual well because he had married Stenka Razin a hundred times or more.

"The Father and Son be with you!" all the Cossacks shouted, and Filka the Devil, grinning like the fiend he was, fetched the whip with which the bridegroom should beat the bride to show her who is master. But Mark did not do this.

Razin began to enjoy the spectacle and to be pleased with himself. At such times he showed the princely blood that was in him, for he selected a scimitar and gave it to Mark himself, and the day came when that scimitar served us well in a fashion Razin little suspected.

In addition to the sword, he made Mark the gift of a boat—one of the Cossack barks that had come down the river. It was as long as five horses and as wide as one, and it had a single mast. There were benches and sweeps for ten rowers. The sides of the boat were splendidly painted with banners and figures of the saints, and the rump of the boat was roofed in like a hut.

The floor of the cabin was covered with Turkish carpets, and hung with fine colored lanterns and silk tapestries that had come from Ispahan. It had a divan with many pillows and ivory tabourets and incense burned in jeweled holders.

To this bark the Cossacks escorted us in their skiffs in the moonlight. When Mark and his bride stood on the roof of the cabin, the warriors raised a shout and let off all their firearms. Then Stenka Razin rose up in his skiff and greeted his new *kounak*.

"One thing I ask of you, Mark," he roared. "When I summon you to sit with me and drink a glass, you will come."

"I will come," said my comrade gravely, and even at the end of all things on the Volga he kept his promise.

This done, the Cossacks rowed off, singing to hold revelry in Astrakhan, while I sat down in the nose of the boat to smoke a pipe I had borrowed from one of the plunderers, and to think. In the cabin were sugared fruits and cheese cakes and red wine and white wine, and I could see the girl eating and drinking a little.

Mother Volga was very quiet that night, and no mist hid the stars. On all sides were anchored the boats of the pirates, each with its light, and canoes and skiffs came and went while the feasting in the town went on apace. The lights on the boats moved very gently when little waves came and went and the lantern of the moon cast a white light on the rushes of the shore and the towers of the city.

Meanwhile Mark had drawn the curtain that shut off the cabin from the belly of the boat and came and sat down by me. He had his short clay pipe, because the warriors had not plundered him, and this he lighted from mine, sitting on the wooden wall that runs around the nose of such a boat, his head propped in his hands.

"Eh, Mark," I said after a long while, "luck has come your way. If Stenka Razin did not have a whim to marry you, we twain would have been food for the fishes by now. It is altogether a miracle."

"I am not married, Uncle Kosta," he said shortly.

"How, not married?"

HE EXPLAINED that the lass had been weaned in a tribe and a land where the priests were not as ours and the churches different. He called her a Puritan, which is a praying person who has a knack of fighting. Chvëdor and our ceremony, the candle and the wedding feast and all the rest of it, he insisted, was not in the least like the weddings in that tribe of *Frankistan*.

"Nay, Mark," I answered when I had thought about this, "a priest is a priest even if he be full of wine. A promise is a promise in *Frankistan* or on the Volga. Did she not light a candle to set before the Holy Mother?"

"She was made to do it by Filka."

"You were not made to take her hand before the priest. It is true that you did not kiss her then, or beat her with the whip and I do not know if you have kissed her now. But you are certainly her husband."

"*Yavash!* Uncle Kosta, I have lived all my life among the bretheren of the coast—a plunderer, a vagabond, a buccaneer! I have slept many a time in a bloodied shirt and have served no king." He laughed under his breath. "A buccaneer once, always a buccaneer. My wedding, a ribald priest on the heels of a drinking bout."

"You would have been a *galliard* among the Cossacks, Mark. Eh, the minstrels must know your name in that far-off sea at the edge of the world."

But Mark shook his head like a man who sees no use in trying to make a hard situation better with words. He said that Mistress Bailly was a flower, a saint, and how was he to care for her?

"Mark," said I, "you drove the Tatars out of my hut. You faced down the Muscovite mutineers with nothing at your back but your shadow. You drank, cup for cup, with Razin and the little father himself swore that you had a horned soul in you. But you do not at all understand how to go about consoling a young girl."

"Perhaps, Uncle Kosta, you might go and talk to her."

"I? A bear putting his paw into a hive! That would not make her glad! Look here, I have not heard her weeping."

"She is not. First she made me tell her about the fate of her uncle, then she thanked me and said she would sleep."

I looked at Mark who was puffing at a cold pipe.

"*Inshallum bak allah!* If I were in your boots, I would not sit out here and hold my head. I would sit by her and hold her hand and stroke her yellow hair. Then I would tell her she is beautiful—and as the saints hear me, that is the truth. Then I would not fail to kiss her."

"The —— take you! Uncle Kosta, you know nothing about such a girl."

"They're alike, all of them. If you don't order them around and show them some endearments they think you don't love them. Then they'll plague you like a demon until you take the horsewhip to them."

Again he shook his head helplessly. Yet that is the truth. When a Cossack maiden is married she fetches a whip to her husband to show that she is ready to serve him. Only if he does not use the whip, she'll get the upper hand, because those young girls are like pasture-bred fillies. They need the bit and spur, otherwise they toss their heads and get out of hand.

Mark explained again that they had gone through the ceremony because Razin made them, and because they wished Stenka to be free to leave the Volga.

"*Taib.* True, Mark. Yet I do not think that this maiden would have done that if she had not loved you."

He started as if I had flicked him with a whip.

"Not to be believed, Uncle Kosta!"

"I have eyes, *kounak*," I said, beginning to be angry with him. "I know. What is the use of talking to you? I am going to sleep."

Mark had forgotten to bring me any supper. He had forgotten everything except his own uncertainty, and when I curled up on the planks he began to pace up and down in his heavy boots—going on tip-toe at times to listen at the curtain to discover if Mistress Bailly slept in peace, and making more noise in so doing than a buffalo going through underbrush to drink. Eh, he kept us both awake with his rambling and muttering.

When I dozed off at last, he shook me up to ask why I thought she loved him.

"Because she watches you when you are not looking and is altogether a different person when you are with her, you fool."

Again I dozed and then heard him splashing around in the river. He had gone over the side of the boat to swim like a dog, which is a custom of the Franks, hard to believe. It was nearly sunrise and I was very weary.

"Listen, Mark," I said angrily, "if you will sit in one place and smoke your pipe or think and not move around in the boat and the water all the time as if the flies were biting you, I will be able to snooze a bit even though I have had nothing to eat."

After that he was quiet, and I found him propped up against the side wall of the boat when it was light. Mistress Bailly was awake, and without making any fuss at all she brought us a fine breakfast on a tray.

When Mark had gone off to talk with Stenka Razin, she watched his skiff out of sight, and then, finding out that I knew a little of the Muscovite tongue, she made me tell her everything that he had done—how he had found favor with the dead governor and had saved me from being skinned alive. I told her some handsome tales because there is nothing to be gained by stickling about facts when a beautiful maiden lends her ear, and we got along splendidly.

She told me that when she and her uncle had been forced to fly from their home, they had dwelt a little among various peoples of *Frankistan* and had journeyed to Moscow when they heard that the emperor was paying foreign officers to drill his soldiery and sail his boats. They had been ordered to Astrakhan when Stenka Razin took up the torch and the sword. She said that a new army was being sent down the Volga to crush the Cossacks.

"Will the Cossack chieftain let us go back to Moscow, Uncle Kosta?" she asked.

"I do not think so. His whim is to keep Mark at his side."

So it happened. While the Cossacks were feasting in the town and the merchants and citizens of the place doffed their caps and bent the knee to us, Mark was summoned at all hours to drink with Razin. He was made to tell about the buccaneers, and the hunters of Tortuga and the great treasure ships that crossed the seas to *Frankistan.* Such things Razin had never heard before, and his favorite story was the one in which Mark related how he had taken the galleon of the Spaniard, boring holes in the skiffs of his men when they rowed up to the enemy in the darkness so that his followers would not lose heart and try to draw back, once the swords began to talk.

Because such deeds were good hearing, Stenka Razin held Mark in favor, and the next days were pleasant ones. We went about clad in cloth of silver and in silks from Kitai,* with belts full of weapons, with wine casks open in all the streets and more meat than we could eat at night. For a bottle of spirits we gave a gold chain to a merchant, and the minstrels made a song about Stenka Razin. Even the shepherds and boatmen of the place had full bellies and wallets and no one mourned the dead Muscovite lords.

The sun smiled on us and we lived like princes in the fine boats of the Cossacks until the day a Terek Cossack rode a foundered horse into the gate of the Tatar city and flung himself, white with dust, from the saddle before Razin.

"Father," he cried, "the shah of the Persians has sent his fleet to sea to make war on you."

THEN Stenka Razin laughed. The townspeople of Astrakhan feared that he would hoist the sails on his *chayaks*, his river skiffs, and go away up the Volga into the steppe where the archfiend himself could not find him, and they would be left without a defender.

On their knees they begged him to stay and hold the city wall against the Moslems who would carry off all the inhabitants and sell them into slavery in Shamaki and Tiflis and Bokhara. Sitting in his chair under the poplars, with a tankard of mead on his knee, Razin heard them through, and laughed.

"We are dogs," he growled, "to bite the Muscovite boyars. We are not a garrison."

For his captains he had other words.

"Come with me, my children. We will frolic!"

It was in the minds of all who heard that he meant to leave Astrakhan to its fate and move up the river. But he had another plan. And at this moment it happened that his eye fell upon Mark, who was sitting with him, and he remembered the warning of my comrade.

"Eh, Mark," Razin said, "are you a prophet as well as a *kounak?* You said the Moslem jackals were getting together a fleet to come against me."

"That is true, *ataman*, as you see."

"Well, I will not await them here in Astrakhan. I will move down among the islands, and their women will wait in vain for the warriors of the shah."

Hearing this, the captains exchanged glances and Chvëdor made bold to speak. The Persian fleet had been seen coasting to the north within a few days of the Volga mouth. In the fleet were a hundred vessels, large and small, manned by perhaps twenty thousand warriors and slaves. The Cossacks, he pointed out, numbered seven thousand, not counting what was left of the Muscovite garrison, and the soldiers might do well enough behind walls supported by heavy cannon, but were little used to river warfare.

"By the black mass!" cried Razin. "I

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do not want the Muscovites. They would overcrowd our boats."

To other arguments he would not listen, and the townspeople thought him mad. They were pleased that the Cossacks were going against the Persians, because there were not ships enough left to them to bear away the inhabitants up the river, and they were thinking of their houses and goods and children.

As for the Cossacks, they were ready to follow Razin anywhere. Was he not their father? Had he not a charm that protected him against bullets, steel or poison? Did he not find plunder and sport for them wherever he turned? They would have gone with him against all Asia!

And so, in fact, the pirate boats were manned on the second day, sixty of them. Filka the Devil and two thousand men were left with the Muscovites who had joined Razin in the city, and the fleet moved off down the Volga after sending picket boats ahead to find the Persians. And with the others went the little bark that had been given to Mark.

Razin wished the buccaneer to come, and Mark was not the man to refuse. Nor would the Frankish girl leave him. Although two brass cannon had been put in the pretty cabin in place of the divan and a crew of a dozen outlaws were in the waist of the vessel, she sat on the rail of the cabin beside Mark, and in vain he urged her that she would be better in Astrakhan.

Eh, the same thought was in my mind. In a battle on the steppe if things go wrong you can turn your horse and go away, but you can not run away on a ship. And if God wills that the ship should cease floating and should sink down in the water, that's the end of everything. I thought of what Koum Agha had said:

"Fire for the hearth, water for the cup."

A ship and a battle on the sea was not to my liking.

Mistress Bailly only smiled at Mark and waved her hand to the children, gathered on the shore near the city wall under conduct of some priest or other. They were delighted at the sight of so many little boats moving down the river and began to sing in their high, sweet voices:

"From the White Island
  On the Mother Volga
Stenka Razin's brothers
  Sail with a merry song."

Our Cossacks all looked at the children and waved their hats, and took it as a good omen. At first they had grumbled because there was a woman on the boat. They were surprized that evening when a skiff came from the big bark of the chieftain with a command that Mark should attend the council of the captains. They had not known that Stenka Razin trusted Mark greatly, and now they treated me in friendly wise and asked me to share their *kasha* and hubble-bubble pipes. They were lean men from the uplands of the Don and Terek, rivermen and hunters like myself—men of good faith, although given to quarreling. They had been kissing the cup a-plenty in the town, but now that we were setting forth to pound the Moslems, they would not touch even mild red wine.

So we sailed down the Volga, five thousand going against twenty thousand, and we knew not what else.

Nor did we know where the Persians were or what channel they would enter. And this, the Cossacks told me, was no light trouble. Because Mother Volga has not one mouth but eighty, all reaching into the sea. How were we to find the Moslems?

WHAT worried our leaders were the eighty mouths of the great river. These mouths spread over the steppe, running around innumerable islands, and some were not channels, but shallow streams down which barks could not sail. Others, nearly all, had sand bars and rocks that barred the way.

So, for as far as a man could ride on a good horse in a day, there was a wilderness in front of us—a wilderness of sluggish streams and marshes, of islands hidden by immense rushes and inhabited only by hawks and gnats and the evil spirits of the waste. Roving Tatars sometimes pitched their tents on one of the islands by a main channel and waited until a bark ran ashore, which often happened, and gave them a chance to plunder the goods of merchants and carry off the merchants to sell as slaves. In all this waste of rushes and rocks and yellow sand a man might lose himself and starve to death.

The Muscovites came there, it is true, to set their nets for sturgeon and strelet; but they had no love for the Volga mouths.

And here it was that Stenka Razin had

decided to give battle to the Moslem fleet; beside an island that he knew well. This was an eminence of rocks on the summit of which he had built a wooden castle when the Muscovites besieged him in former years. It was called Shatiri Bogar, the Mountain of the Prince, and it lay beside one of the navigable channels.

Stenka Razin was shrewd enough to know that in the open sea his small Cossack craft would fare badly against the big sailing barks and *sandals* and oar galleys of the Moslems.

He had brought a score of heavy iron cannon from Astrakhan and barrels of powder and round shot and grape. And he planned to set a trap for the Persians.

"Eh," he said, "we will catch them in nets, like fish."

And that night, when the full moon came up over the Volga mouths, we saw what he meant. We came to the nets.

They stretched from the shore of one long island to another save for a space of the length of three spears that had been left for the boats of the merchants to pass. Piles made from the trunks of trees, sharpened at one end, had been driven down into the bottom of the channel in a ragged line, and between the piles nets of strong hemp were stretched.

There were three lines of these nets, a stone's cast apart—the two upstream having openings in them so that the fish might swim through and be held against the lowest trap. Then the Muscovites would row up in their boats and sink hooks behind the heads of the sturgeon and slay them. Since there had been no Muscovites at the nets for many days, the traps were nearly filled with the long, twisting bodies.

And since the sturgeon were great and powerful, the nets were heavy, too heavy for any boat to break through.

Behind this triple line of nets Razin planned to place the bulk of his boats, manned with Cossacks who had muskets. So, in a way, they would be behind an entrenchment—a palisade in the river itself. And since there was no time to lose, he set a hundred men to work pulling up the piles and the hemp meshes from the up-stream line, enough of them to close the gap that had been left for boats to go through.

But before this was done, twenty skiffs and barks and barges floated down through the gap, down the river for the distance of two musket shots, along the side of a great island in the center of which rose a rocky height. This was Shatiri Bogar, and its shore was hidden by a mass of rushes—the highest I had ever seen—like a forest growing out of the water.

In seventeen of these craft were the heavy cannon he had fetched from Astrakhan. And these boats were sent through the tall rushes in single file so that they made but one track which was afterward closed by a screen of rushes. They were beached and the cannon, the shot and the powder, landed. A command was given, and the Cossacks from the seventeen boats began to dig an entrenchment in the sand of the shore.

They worked swiftly, for this was labor they liked well, and the trick they thought to play on the Moslems made them merry. They arranged places for the cannon behind the earthwork so that a little after sunup, they had twenty guns on the shore of Shatiri Bogar, hidden behind the towering rushes.

And these twenty guns pointed at the channel. A Polish officer of artillery—Heaven knows whence he came or why he fled to the outlaws—commanded the guns and the thousand men who were in the redoubt. And the stout priest Chvëdor, sitting atop a powder keg, commanded the Pole, in order that everything should be as Razin wished. I wondered why the Cossacks did not man the wooden fort on the summit of the rock; but not so much as a lookout was posted there. The buildings looked empty because they were in truth deserted except by crows.

Aye, all these things I saw because our bark was one of the three that had drifted below the nets and had not been run ashore on Shatiri Bogar. I saw, too, how the trap was being made. First the cannon, then the nets would hinder the Moslem boats from going up the channel. But why should the Persians choose this of the half dozen main channels? And why could they not turn around and go away to another one when they discovered the lair of the Cossacks?

Razin, however, had thought of all things. At the council he said:

"*Hai,* my brothers, the trap must be baited. Who ever heard of a wolf putting his head into a snare unless there was bait? We will anchor three boats out the mouth of the Shatiri Bogar channel and when the Persians come up along the coast they will sight our boats and come this way."

To this the captains agreed—all except Mark, who had set such traps himself in that sea of the Spaniards at the edge of the world.

"Nay, *ataman*," he said thoughtfully. "I have seen the Persians and their leaders. They are fathers of treachery, and they are ever distrustful. If they behold three Cossack boats waiting for them they may take it into their heads to go elsewhere, thinking that these are scouts."

"Well, they may. They will ask their astrologers and, if the omens are favorable, they will press ahead. In that way they are fools."

"True," assented Mark. "But who knows what the soothsayers will advise?"

The Cossacks exchanged glances and Razin gnawed his nails. He was bold. He had gone with five thousand against a great fleet. He was shrewd—he had blocked the channel, as I have said. But beyond that he cared not, trusting in his luck.

"Eh, what?" he asked.

"Send the three barks out into the sea athwart the course of the Moslems. When they sight the Persians, let them veer and sail confusedly as if the pilots were terrified or as if they had no pilots. Drawing back into this channel they will surely bring some of the Moslem craft in pursuit. And where some of them go, all will go."

"You have spoken well, Mark. You have planned wisely. Do you wish to be part of the bait?"

"Aye," said Mark when the eyes of the Cossack leaders turned on him.

Stenka Razin had asked the question idly, pondering whom he would send as captain of the three ships, which would be the same as a death warrant. When Mark accepted at once, he stroked his mustache and said no more. He would have gone himself, but the Cossacks would not have permitted it.

"Eh, be it so." Suddenly he remembered the woman on the bark. "What will you do with your wife? We will guard her on Shatiri Bogar."

Mark pondered and shook his head.

"Unless we bound her, she would not leave the bark. She will go with me."

AND so in truth she did. All that morning I had been asleep in the nose of the boat where Mark would not see me and take it into his head to summon me to row with the Cossacks who were laboring at the oars—since the wind was the warm, south wind, and the boat would not go against it without the oars. When the sun was overhead and the thumping of the oars stopped, I woke up and found that a new Cossack was on the boat.

A slender youth with a white lambskin hat and white wool *cherkeska*, bound with a broad red sash. The boots of the newcomer were red morocco, embroidered with gold, and a pistol and a light *yataghan* were thrust through the red sash. Eh, that was Mistress Bailly and a handsome boy she made, standing on the rump of the boat beside Mark, looking intently to the south.

"*A-yar!*" said a Terek warrior who was sitting smoking beside me. "She is better so, the princess! Look!"

With his pipe he pointed to the south. Here the gray water was covered by a black mass moving along the shore toward us. Never have I seen such a number of vessels—high *sandals*, swift shallops, darting like spiders over the waves, squat merchants' barks and galleys—all with sails of every color, both square and triangular and all moving toward us while we sat on the water, rolling from side to side and making no effort to escape.

Even before I saw the green crescents on the white sails of the *sandals*, I knew this was the fleet of the Persians. Among the ships were many that had fled from Astrakhan and had been captured.

We were not far from the coast, but when I looked to the north whence we had come I saw only a gray line, shrouded in mist. We had followed the west coast but we had come many leagues from the river's mouths. On the rump of the ship I found Mark leaning against the pole by which he steered.

"Surely, Mark," I said, "it is time to hoist the sail and tighten the reins of the ship so that we will not fall into the hands of yonder dogs."

"Your place, Barbakosta," he responded, "is there in the bow."

Mistress Bailly smiled at me, and her eyes were bright. Mark, too, appeared taller, and his words had a bite to them. He was studying the clouds and the birds that wheeled over the masts of the Moslems —rooks and hawks that had come from God knows where.

Ekh-ma! The men from the Terek and the Don mocked me when I went back and sat down, not at all proudly, because the sons of jackals had heard the words of the Frank. One said—

"Messenger to the chieftain!"

Another put in—

"Ambassador Barbakosta!"

"Hi, brothers, to the oars! Barbakosta does not want to fall into the hands of the Moslems."

"Nay, he went to woo the *ataman's* wife, the old dog! His fleas woke him up."

I had not thought before then that a Cossack on a boat was not expected to speak to the officer or to go up on the roof where the tiller was. Just then Mark gave an order and the men ran to the mast and began to hoist the long beam to which the sail hangs. The wind turned the boat and we ploughed through the waves instead of rolling around in one place.

But it was not part of Mark's plan to run away quickly. He turned the tiller and our bark bumped against the side of another so that some of the ropes were broken and the sail began to flap like a limed pigeon.

Soon I heard the "Hourra-ha-a!" of the Moslems who were closest to us in several long shallops. Our Cossacks mended the ropes that were broken and we sped away again, leaning over on one side because the wind was pushing very strongly.

The islands of the Volga mouths began to draw nearer, and I picked out the high rock of Shatiri Bogar before midafternoon. By then we could see the peaked turbans and the mailed corselets of the Persians in the shallops, and it was clear that the whole fleet was coming after us.

Slowly opened out the mouth of the river toward which we were headed. White surf fringed the rocks and the tall rushes wavered and bent like a forest under a tempest. Our boat leaned over more and more until the men beside me lay down on the floor with their feet braced against the lower railing, paying no heed to the spray that came over us. They watched the sail and said that Mark at last was trying to make the boat show its best speed.

The cannon in the Persian boats began to go off, and every time the man from the Terek would lift his head to see where the balls had struck.

"The birds are flying high," he said, and I asked why we did not return their fire.

He pointed down to the floor of the bark and shook his head, meaning that it was impossible to fire unless the deck were level; but our pursuers began to loose more cannon at us. Their great *sandals* had come up closer, and they seemed to have no reluctance to burn powder. This was because they did not wish us to escape and bear the tidings, as they fancied, of their arrival to Astrakhan. So said the man from the Terek, pointing to the shore that seemed to fly toward us. Thin, veil-like mist was gathering between us and the rock of Shatiri Bogar. Yet I could see the wooden house of Stenka Razin on the summit with the rooks settled about it.

Surely the Persians would fear nothing from that, because birds would not act like that if men were about.

"Look!" said the Terek Cossack, ramming his elbow into my ribs.

The largest of our boats had been hit more than once by the Moslem cannon. And I saw white splinters fly up from its side as it swung slowly, first this way, then that, its mast broken down. The leading shallops circled around it as dogs rush in on a wolf. Now the cannon of our comrades in the disabled boat began to speak, puffs of smoke darting out and drifting down the wind.

But it availed them little. A black ship with two masts, towering over the rolling *chayak*, headed toward it and struck it with a dull crashing of wood. The Persian *sandal* kept on after us, and our boat sank lower and lower until it could not be seen at all.

Mark had seen, but his face had not changed. The girl had grown pale and her eyes were smouldering. She sat on the deck at his feet where the railing protected her from arrows.

The roaring of the swell on the shore grew louder, the soughing of the rushes and shrieking of the gulls, and the breath and power of the sea seemed to sweep us into the gut between the islands. We fled. Crowding together, the first boats of the fleet were close upon our heels.

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WE PASSED the flank of Shatiri Bogar where the thickening mist and the rushes hid a thousand men with their cannon. We swept around the bend in the river beyond, Mark steering the boat past rocks and the gray shapes of sand-bars. In the farther reach of the river we moved more slowly because the wind did not push as much. What became of the other boat I do not know. Perhaps it stumbled on a sand-bar and sat.

For a space we drifted alone in a shroud of gray mist with our heads close to the water, listening. The Terek Cossack got up and looked over the nose of the boat, listening also. Mark jumped up to the railing, keeping one foot on the pole that steers the boat, attentive to things that were going on behind the gray veil. We heard firelocks booming far behind us, and I thought of the second boat.

Eh, we had led the dogs of *Tourki* into the nets, but we ourselves were in the trap. We could not go ahead. There was no longer a path through the nets. We could not go back. The oncoming fleet was at our heels. And now that the wind had ceased the river began to push at us, first this way, then that.

"To the oars!" cried Mark.

Four oars were thrust into the water, and Mark turned the guiding pole so that we moved toward the island on the far side of the river from Shatiri Bogar. We felt our way among rocks and shallows until we entered a hole in the side of the island—a cove, the Terek Cossack said. Big black boulders rose on either side and passed behind us. Then the oars were lifted and our boat sat on the ground, although the water still stretched a spear cast to the shore.

"Barbakosta," Mark ordered, "take one man and go to a high place on the shore. Watch the river! Bring us tidings!"

I took the tall man from the Terek and waded ashore. We carried our firelocks through the brush and shivered when the wind whipped through our trousers. We heard the shouting of the Moslems, the creaking of wood on the ships and the threshing of oars. We could see perhaps half the river, with black shapes moving up the stream.

And then the gray curtain was cut by red flashes and rolling white smoke upstream where the Cossack *chayaks* were in ambush behind the nets. All of the boats had small brass cannon and the balls tore through the close packed Moslems. But I heard no firing from Shatiri Bogar below the bend.

"Chvëdor is not a fool," my companion grunted. "He will not loose his iron dogs until the *Tourki* begin to flee down the river."

Then I saw the whole of the trâp Stenka Razin had set. It was like the trap the Muscovites made in the water for the sturgeon—easy to get into, but no way out. The cannon on Shatiri Bogar were not to keep the Moslems from ascending the Volga; nay, to sink them when they fled.

For a time we sat and watched, and it seemed as if the Persians were trying to force their way through the nets, because we heard the clashing of steel and the war shouts—

"Houra-haa-a!"

More boats were coming up and these began to drift over toward us, oar galleys and *sandals* packed with men who were all watching the fighting up the river. They did not look happy. By and by we heard the Cossack cry:

"*Saryn na kitchkou!* Up, lads to the bows!"

The Terek Cossack let his pipe go out and rammed his arm into my ribs.

"Eh, Barbakosta, the brothers are warming up. They are getting their blood up!"

I had drawn careful aim at a tall *mirza* who stood on the rump of the nearest galley, a stone's throw away. He was a fine man in a black *khalat* with a brass knob on the top of his white turban that was shaped like a lily. Over his head was a canopy of striped stuff, and two black slaves stood behind him with peacock plumes on their noddles. And upon the mast near him dangled two Muscovites, taken from the boats that had fled from Astrakhan—now hanging head down, roped by the ankles.

From below the bend thundered Chvëdor's big cannon—*bong, bang, bong!* My *mirza* looked surprized, but he could see nothing, of course. One by one, the ships began to try to go back.

Bong, bang, bong! Thus spoke Chvëdor's guns, and all at once, as a flight of swallows start up from a thicket, the Persians became afraid. A galley broke off its oars against the side of a big ship; a sailing boat ran down a skiff. There was not room enough in the river for them all to turn and go out as they wanted.

Many of them started toward our shore, the *mirza's* boat among them. At first a few, then throngs of Moslems began to run up the shore, shouting and holding their heads. That is always the way with the *Tourki*. When they are attacking or cornered they are brave fighters. But when they flee they rush blindly.

"It is time to go back to Mark," I said, and the Cossack from the Terek nodded assent. Indeed it was time, because they had seen us on our rock.

We ran down through the brush until my companion stopped suddenly, putting his hand to his side. Nay, he was not hit by an arrow, he was feeling in his pocket.

"*Stoy bratikou, lioulkou zagoubil!*" he cried. "Stop, brother, I have lost my pipe!"

"May the dogs bite you! If you go back, you'll never smoke *tabak* again."

But the mad fellow turned and started up into the rocks to look for his pipe. I waited several moments, and then I saw turbans and cloaks on the height where he had vanished. Nay, I never saw him again.

To Mark I said that the *Tourka* boats were in a stampede like cattle, leaving the nets. And what was going on by Shatiri Bogar I knew not. Indeed it was not long before our eyes beheld what our ears had long been aware of. First a skiff rowed into our hole in the shore as if the fiends were behind it. Then a gilded *sandal* with its mast shot away.

These boats paid no heed to us. They ran on the ground and sat and the men swarmed to shore. Some began to shoot arrows at us, and we more than paid them back. But finally there came the oared galley of the tall *mirza*, with half its men lying bleeding on the deck. When he saw us, he shouted angrily, and the galley ran in beside us, and forty Moslems poured over the rail of our bark, ululating with blood lust, with steel in their hands and teeth. We shouted once—

"*Hai—Kosaki!*"

And we fired our muskets into them. I picked up a heavy boat-hook with a long point and prong, regretting greatly my nine daggers. By breaking the shaft of the boat-hook in twain, I had a good weapon. One man I pierced with the point and another I hooked through the ribs.

I was knocked into the nose of the boat, my boat-hook lost. A gun lay here, and I loaded it, being protected for the moment by the mast. Mark was standing on the rump of the vessel alone with the girl, his scimitar flashing up and down—up and down, as he sprang from side to side. An arrow flickered into his thigh and he staggered.

At the same instant the girl fired a pistol down into the Moslems who were climbing over the dying Cossacks toward the stern. She drew her light sword bravely. But what is a blade in the hand of one unskilled? A giant black slave sprang up beside her and struck the scimitar out of her hand with his heavy sword. Then he hacked deep below her shoulder just as Mark reached him, stumbling, and cut off his head cleanly.

Hai, that was a good stroke! "*Shabash!*" I cried, and shot down a warrior who had run at Mark's back.

It seemed to me then that our lives would go out in another moment—Mark with his arm around the bleeding girl, raging back and forth on one leg; I with an empty gun and no other weapon. Then I heard a roaring voice:

"Steel to them! Strike on all sides!"

And a man jumped from the galley into our deck. A man with a ring-mail shirt half slashed from his shoulders and the tatters of red sleeves flying when he struck with a long curved blade that sang in the air. Eh, the blade dripped red, and the man scattered blood as he crashed into the huddle of the Moslems.

His blade snapped off, and he thrust out with his fists, sending men flying. His big, bow legs bent and leaped, and he began to lash about with a battle ax he had caught up. No one could stand against him. Shields split and bones snapped under his blows. The Moslems who had been about Mark—among them the shining *mirza*—flung themselves on him until they all became a knot of arms and heads, twisting among the dead bodies in the belly of the boat.

For the last moment I had heard other shouts.

"Aid for the *ataman!* Slash them brothers, slash!"

Other Cossacks dropped over the rail and pounced on the knot of men. Pistols barked, and before my gun was loaded the deck was cleared of all Moslems save the dead and the dying.

That was how Stenka Razin came to seek

Mark in the fight on the Volga. He wiped the sweat from his black brows and spat from bleeding lips. When he was certain that Mark was alive and not dangerously hurt he turned on the Cossacks who had followed him across the empty galley from two *chayaks* that had come up to the far side of the galley.

"Eh, dogs—fathers of a thousand slaves! You were late, late! The Frank was nearly done for when you came."

They were ashamed and hung their heads, until one of them looked around at that sepulchre of a boat.

"*Aga tachomek chapar Frankistan,*" he said. "The Frankish lord is brave."

Then Stenka Razin saw the Moslems gathering on the heights above him, drawing their bows. Instantly he sprang into the water and waded ashore, leaving a red trail behind him, heaving himself up on the shore as the wild *bougáy*, lord of the steppes, comes up out of a river, shaking his horns and roaring to let other animals know that he is on the shore. So Stenka Razin roared out of an open throat, running toward the uneasy bowmen. And, though they were many and his followers few, they turned and fled.

That is how Stenka Razin fought—without mercy for himself, his men or his foes. And yet he took thought in that red twilight for Mark, his *kounak*.

WE CARRIED the girl ashore, Mark and I, as gently as we could, and laid her on the sand, drawing off her *cherkesska*. I had thought to find her cut half through, the life all gone. But Mark had thought to make her put on a shirt of finely wrought ring mail.

The blow of the slave's sword had severed this under the arm-pit and had driven many of the links into her white flesh, yet the steel rings had checked the bite of the blade and the wound was no deeper than my thumb joint. It had not quite reached the wall around the heart.

"Eh, Mark," I said to hearten him, seeing that his eyes were haggard, "spit on some clay, put it on the cut and give her vodka and she will live to give you more than one son."

Instead of that, he bade me go to all the fiends, and bathed out the girl's bleeding side with salt water. She whimpered but did not cry out. Then he bound her tightly under the arms with the white cotton turban cloth of the Persian *mirza* which was the cleanest thing within reach.

When this was done she made him put her head on his knee and held up her hands. He stroked her hair, but she pulled down his head so that he kissed her many times on the eyes and lips. That was the way of it.

"See, Mark," I pointed out from where I was sitting at a little distance so that the smoke of my pipe would not make the girl cough, "it is as I said. Although you are a fool where such women are concerned, she wants you for her man, if God gives her life."

"The saints bless you, Uncle Kosta," he whispered, and tears were shining in his eyes.

And in the end her life was spared. Mark went as swiftly as a *chayak* could be rowed to Astrakhan and from there, all the weary way up to Moscow, on the Volga, I accompanying him because I had no wish to leave my *kounak*. He wanted a Muscovite surgeon to attend her, but she wanted no more than his nursing, though he could not understand that. He had eyes for nothing except this young girl lying on the rug under the canopy, nor would he permit any one else to give orders on the skiff.

He was no longer a wanderer or a prisoner. In Moscow he held his head high and spoke proudly to the Muscovites who, having heard of his deeds at Astrakhan and in the Volga mouths, offered him a commission as colonel of a fleet. This time he accepted.

The battle of Shatiri Bogar was much talked about, because the Persians had been badly cut up. Men said that ten thousand of them had departed this life, trapped between Chvëdor's guns and the nets, and the Cossack took more spoil than they knew what to do with. Never since then have the Moslems launched a fleet on the Caspian.

As for Mistress Bailly, she was married again to Mark by a priest of her own faith, a little man in dull garments who read through his nose out of a book. Although she and Mark took pleasure in it, the ceremony was lacking to my mind. No candles were set before the Holy Mother and the drinking was not a cupful to the revelry in Astrakhan when the moon looked down through the poplars and the lover and lass stood between life and death while Stenka Razin frolicked.

Nay, should a promise be said over again?

I thought of the promise Mark had made to Razin—that he would come and sit with the Cossack when he was summoned. For a time it seemed as if Mark and his new fleet would be sent against the Cossacks and the two fighters would exchange sword strokes instead of stories.

Then we heard that the Cossacks had been cut to pieces by the Muscovite army that had been sent from the north. It was in the north, too, that Prince Boriatinski broke the power of Razin. Eh, the Cossacks had suffered as well as the Moslems in that red evening on the Volga. The survivors scattered, and Razin was hunted from place to place.

Before long tidings came that he had been taken, in a hut on the Volga. He had killed fourteen of the soldiers that surrounded him. Then he came out of the door, leaving his sword within, saying:

"Take me, curs! I am ready to be killed."

IT WAS a day in late summer when the leaves were dry on the oaks that grew in the promenade before the great church of Saint Vasili the Blessed. Mark was walking with his lady on his arm, accompanied by Frankish and Muscovite officers of the Tsar's bodyguards. I, as his servant, followed behind with a stick instead of a gun, to drive away beggars. Mark had on a splendid white kaftan and broad red boots and a wide Frankish hat with plumes, and many officers were the first to bow when they met him. But that evening a crowd came toward the Kremyl gate, escorting a file of halberdiers who surrounded a cart drawn by black oxen.

In the cart, leaning against the rail, his arms folded, was Razin. Eh, his finery was no more. His shirt was in rags, and his feet were bare; his hair had grown long on his head. The wild *bougây* of the steppe had been torn by wolves and the flesh of his purple face was sodden, his eyes dull. No longer did his followers crowd around him. Look where he would, he beheld only the eyes of hatred.

Yet he saw Mark and leaned over to stare at him and his lady.

"*Hai*, Mark," he said beseechingly, "my friend, come and sit with me in the prison. Come and talk over the wine cup these few days."

He had spoken in Turkish and none of the Muscovites understood. Mark looked long at Razin.

"I will come," he said.

Afterward, I went to him and said that this thing was not to be thought of. In the Tsar's service a colonel could not go and drink with a Cossack pirate. It was known that Mark had had dealings with Razin in Astrakhan, but this had been forgiven him in view of his skill in handling the new ships. If he went to Razin like a brother now he would be suspected and treated in evil wise. That is how it is at a Tsar's court.

But the lass, when she understood the matter, said suddenly that he was to go and visit Razin as he had promised.

And Mark laughed, looking down at her with pride.

"It is as you see, Uncle Kosta," he cried.

As for me, knowing that Mark was not to be persuaded from anything, I burned a gold candle before the good Saint Nicholas and went to the river gate where some Nogai Tatars of my acquaintance had a skiff that they were willing to sell. I bought it, and the Tatars too, for we lacked not gold in those days. I made everything ready to flee.

For three days Mark went to the prison, I carrying a keg of brandy behind him. Because of his rank, Razin's warders could not refuse him. And far into the night the two of them sat drinking, cup for cup, saying little.

At times Razin would tell of how he frolicked on the Volga and at times Mark would relate how the buccaneers made a kingdom in the islands that lie at the edge of the world. When the candles burned low, Razin would ask if Mark were coming again to sit with him.

"Well, *kounak*," he said on the third day, "soon the stirrup cup."

On the fourth day Mark came, indeed, and so did the priest and the executioners. The crowd around the prison and the open space where he was to die in the Kremyl was very great. The cart and the black oxen were in readiness, and even musicians had been summoned. Razin was given a goblet of mead and, as a last favor, allowed to smoke the pipe for which he asked.

With it between his teeth he climbed into the cart and leaned down to grasp Mark's hand. He noticed the musicians with pleasure and smiled.

"*Shabash!*" he said to Mark. "Well done!"

He did not think that such words were like to be a noose around Mark's neck. Stenka Razin waved farewell to his *kounak* with his pipe and called out to the fiddlers—

"Strike up, lads!"

The oxen grunted and the cart creaked and he started forward through the crowd, roaring his favorite song—the same the children of Astrakhan had sung when we floated down the river toward the Volga mouths:

"From the White Island
 On the Mother Volga,
Stenka Razin's brothers
 Sail with a merry song"—

So died Razin, lord of the steppe, our little father.

As for Mark, he went to the Kremyl and handed to the Muscovites his insignia of rank. Perhaps because he acted swiftly, perhaps because they knew he was planning to leave Muscovy, but surely because they did not know quite how to deal with Mark, the Muscovite lords did not try to make him a prisoner.

He went to his own quarters and took off the white uniform, putting on his old leather and armour and the scimitar Razin had given him. The young Frankish girl, his wife, was in readiness, and they rode out of the river gate on two good horses.

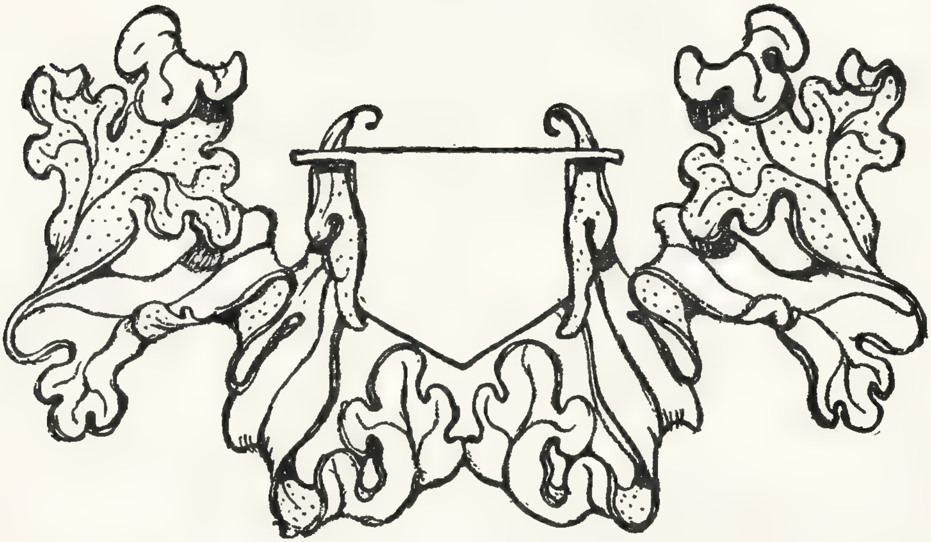
By the huts of the Tatars I stopped them, saying that a boat was in readiness for flight and my shack in the mountains by the Caspian was waiting for them.

"Eh, Uncle Kosta," Mark laughed, "it is as you see. A buccaneer is always a buccaneer and never a lord at court."

He reached down then to grip my hand and say that here our roads parted, since I was for the Volga and the steppe. He and the girl were going into Frankistan, to the great sea in the west, to seek again the islands that lay at the edge of the world.

And so it was that I said farewell to my *kounak*, a man of his word, a man after my heart.

Today, if you sail upon the Volga in a *chayak*, the song of the Cossack river men will repeat the name of Stenka Razin, and if you talk to them, the old Cossacks, many will recall Mark of Astrakhan. He and Razin—where will you find such men today?



THE CONTEST MAN

by Alan Le May

Author of "Whack-Ear's Pup," "The Legacy Mule," etc.

"WHACK–EAR" BANKS pulled the collar of his sheepskin coat up around his big tousled head, and lighted a crooked cigaret. The brisk wind, sweeping down with the dusk from the northern ranges, tore a trailing file of sparks from the cigaret, and sent them swirling on the warpath into oblivion.

"Speakin' of untoward an' nonparalleled circumstances," said he, "didja see the nifty-dressed feller that rode up just as we was finishin' supper?"

He peered quizzically through the chill twilight at the other punchers of the Triangle R.

"What's nonparallel about a man on a horse?" asked "Dixie" Kane, the slender bronc-peeler.

"This feller," said Whack-Ear, "wears the killin'est clothes I ever see straddlin' a mortal horse. He's got a hat weighin' pretty near as much as a saddle, with carved pictures on it. His chaps must have absorbed anyways six of the loudest-colored pinto goats that ever said 'blat'; an' his vest has bead flowers, an' embroidery, an' dofixin's on, until his life sure ain't goin' to be safe anywheres in the neighborhood of a Injun buck. His belt is about six inches wide, an' his shirt is purple silk, an' his handkerchief is red silk, an' though I can't say for sure, I'll lay anybody that his underwear is green silk, just to make the rainbow complete.

"An', mind yuh, all these fixin's is draped on just one feller—just a medium-sized feller, an' him about twenty pounds under weight, at that!"

"Gosh darn," said Dixie.

And rich, bubbling chuckles came from "Mournful" Andrews, the round, moon-faced cowboy with the merry eyes, like willing applause.

Whack-Ear Banks drew his huge frame up and shifted his seat, poising himself for the delivery of his big sensation.

"This handsome feller and his clothes admit open an' outright that they never been on a ranch before! Not a cow ranch, or a horse ranch, or a dog ranch, or not even a—low-down sheep ranch—not in his whole life."

The merry, round face of Mournful Andrews cracked from ear to ear, and a brisk cannonade of irrepressible chuckles burst from him, trailing off into deep rumblings in his barrel-like chest.

"A tenderfoot," breathed Dixie Kane, not without a certain ecstatic anticipation.

"Yes an' no," said Whack-Ear. "To some extent, but yet not altogether an' exactly. Of course Old Man Rutherford demands to know just how the —— he expects to do winter ridin' for the Triangle R with nothin' in his favor but a suit of mail order clothes. So this feller goes to work an' takes down his suitcase, an' gets out—"

"Suitcase?" demanded Dixie Kane.

"I said suitcase," Whack-Ear affirmed.

"'Scuse me for buttin' in," said Mournful, "but did the horse likewise have window curtains on?"

"Out of the suitcase," Whack-Ear pursued, "he gets out a silver cup close to a foot high, with a statue of a kettlin' horse plastered to one side; an' a string of medals with his name carved on, which same he allows is Joe Gill.

"An' he mentions that he's a contest hand, and well and favorably known in the parts where the boys rides for the grandstand and to —— with the stock."

It took several moments for them to digest this.

"I used to be a contest hand," said Dixie Kane, with the air of a man who has been through it all.

Dixie had recently become twenty-one years old.

"With all due regard," said Whack-Ear, "for the handsome efforts of Dixie, the time he got throwed so far an' high at Cheyenne—"

"My foot slipped," flared Dixie. "I could o' rode that sorrel till his tongue hung out pretty near to his knees, an' well the judges knew it, too!"

"Dixie's spectacular an' record-breakin' high dive aside," continued Whack-Ear, thrusting ham-like fists deeper into the pockets of his sheepskin, "I never had much use for contest hands. I like the boys that'll work right out in the mud with the cows. Cattle bein' the main feature in the cattle business, to my mind. These grandstand fellers have got the idee that just because we wear overalls, an' don't bother to throw down every cow we see with our bare hands, that we don't know anythin' about ridin' an' such. An' as fer me," and here a twinkle appeared in Whack-Ear's grave eyes, "I dunno but what I'm willin' to leave this feller show us how to handle some of the more difficult an' particular parts of the work—seein' 's he's got medals an' such provin' he's so good."

"To start off with," opined Dixie rumpling his sandy hair, "I figure the boy should have a real hand-picked string, includin' a few of the kind o' cayuses he's used to ridin' as a regular thing. Start off with Long Sweet for top horse; an' Cricket maybe, an' that buckskin that Charlie Decatur spoiled, the time the buckskin pretty nigh spoiled him."

"I'll just let him have Krag off o' my string," offered Mournful. "I'm not selfish!"

"YOU see," said Whack-Ear Banks the following day, as he threw down the heavily frosted bars of the breaking-corral gate, "the Old Man says to me, 'Give Mr. Gill a string o' quiet stock,' says he, an' I sure done like he said. Of course, if these horses is *too* quiet for you, I wouldn't be surprized if you might be able to swap off with some o' the other boys, for ponies a little more lively an' willin'."

"Quiet riding will suit me," said Joe Gill.

In spite of the eye-stunning flash of his contest clothes, the new hand presented the general appearance of a rather backward and unassuming man. He was of slender and youthful build, and beneath the cockily worn ten-pound hat his blue eyes were mild and unaggressive.

Whack-Ear noted with a touch of scorn that the contest rider's face appeared thin-skinned, almost pallid, in contrast with the coppery leather visages of the other men.

"Your horses and Dixie Kane's are in this little corral here," said he. "Dixie likes quiet horses too."

Dixie had roped his bay gelding, Shot, and was already saddling.

"Which would you say was the quietest and most reasonable?" asked Joe Gill, when Whack-Ear had pointed out the eight or nine reprobates that were to compose his string.

"Well," pondered Whack-Ear rubbing his jaw with a gloved hand, "some say Baby Face but I say Long Sweet—that maple-sugar pony over there."

Joe Gill stepped toward the clustered horses on the far side of the corral, shaking out his noose. A perfectly formed loop began to spin, hovering poised like a halo above his head. Presently the spinning loop floated forward effortlessly, settled lightly over Long Sweet's head, and gently drew snug.

Joe Gill saddled expertly, his dexterous buckskin-gloved hands tying the latigo strap with swift finesse.

"He's just a little uneasy about mountin'," offered Dixie Kane. "I'll just steady him while you climb up."

Dixie held Long Sweet by bridle and one ear while Joe Gill prepared to mount. Disdaining to use the stirrups, the slender man in the flashy cowboy clothes placed one hand on the pommel and vaulted neatly into the saddle. Things happened.

Dixie Kane leaped back as Long Sweet went violently into the air. The astonished contest rider had hardly touched the saddle when he found himself flung high out of the leather. When Joe Gill next touched the horse he was no longer in the saddle at all, but behind the saddle's cantle, astride the hunching loins. He grabbed the cantle of the saddle with both hands, the split reins, still clutched at their extremity, flying loose and free.

"Hey!" yelled Mournful Andrews. "Farther forward. That ain't the place to sit! Oh, gee-hee-hee-hee-hee! Oh, hahahahahahaha!"

The other punchers snickered and grinned, but the melon-shaped Mournful Andrews was doubled up in a convulsive agony of mirth.

Up and down the middle of the corral bucked Long Sweet, coming down vertically on stiffened forelegs in terrific jolts, changing ends, screaming with rage. Then the watching cowboys realized that the unseated rider was not yet thrown. Still grimly clawing leather, Joe Gill had somehow regained the saddle; they saw him find one lashing stirrup, then the other. He was no longer gripping leather, but riding the battling horse with a close, firm seat.

"Ride him, cowboy," suddenly yelled Whack-Ear Banks. "Stay with him, bucko!"

The punchers had forgotten that they were watching a detested contest hand who wore impertinent clothes. The exhibition of game riding pulled them out of themselves, and they whooped.

"Eeyahoo!" they yelled. "Ha-a-ang to him!"

Long Sweet was giving the best he had. Joe Gill's spurs were striping his flanks with red at every jump. The horse was apt to think that he had backed into half a carload of squirming barbed wire, before he was through. Long Sweet quit.

Fanning the horse along, to keep him going while the going was good, Joe Gill swept out through the gate and disappeared beyond the log buildings of the Triangle R.

"Not so terrible rotten," adjudged Whack-Ear, "if he did use a kind of complicated beginnin'. Got over the giggles yet, Mournful?"

"I like to split," said Mournful in a faint weak voice, "I ain't laughed so hard since the time Dixie broke his leg. Did you see the expression on his face? I thought I'd die—"

The shaggy headed straw-boss suddenly recalled that he had been rooting for a man not of his own kind.

"Great hollerin' grief," said Whack-Ear. "If we let this suit of swell clothes get away with stuff like that, he's goin' to be plumb onsufferable."

"Here's the horse he wouldn't of rode," said Dixie from the saddle. "This horse I'm sittin' on right here was the fightin'est fool ever foaled, when I broke him last spring. If ever a cayuse had a jolt like dynamite, this —— did! He liked to throwed even me."

"He liked to throwed you, did he?" Whack-Ear commented. "I sure would like to see what manner o' leap you'd have to take through the air in order to admit that you was actually throwed!"

"If only," mourned Dixie, ignoring Whack-Ear, "we could get Shot to act like he did then we'd have something that wouldn't be rode, by Mr. Gill nor nobody else—less'n it was me again. Maybe a sand bur now—"

"I'm all prepared in advance," stated Mournful Andrews. "I got a perscription. Just switch this contest hand on to Dixie's horse—an' leave it to me!"

"Dunno but what I'm willin'," Whack-Ear conceded.

"But—" began Dixie Kane.

There was no time for further conference. Long Sweet now reappeared; Joe Gill, sitting easily in the saddle, seemed to have the situation well in hand.

"How'd you like him?" Whack-Ear called.

"I guess he's goin' to go all right," said Joe Gill lifelessly.

"Still an' all," Whack-Ear went on, "I gotta admit Long Sweet ain't as quiet as I thought he was, not altogether. I reckon you've had enough shakin' up for one day."

"I guess maybe I have," said Joe Gill.

"That bein' the case, I figure to give you a different horse now, somethin' we know will act—"

"I guess maybe," said Joe Gill, "I'd rather go right along with Long Sweet. We've reached a kind of understanding here and I guess maybe—"

"The horse I'm giving you," said Whack-

Ear firmly, "is one we *know* is quiet. Get down, Dixie, you're ridin' another horse. Throw your rig on Dixie's bay, Mr. Gill!"

"I guess maybe I'd rather—" began Joe Gill.

"Who's running this show?" Whack-Ear wanted to know.

Without further argument the two punchers changed horses and saddles. Joe Gill mounted Dixie Kane's Shot with a certain air of introspection that had not been evident when he vaulted so casually on to Long Sweet. But Shot stood quietly; and when Gill had neck-reined Shot in a close figure eight he began to look happier.

"Wait—your saddle blanket's folded under," exclaimed Mournful Andrews, stepping quickly to the flank of Joe Gill's horse. Dexterously he slid a hand under Shot's saddle blanket, as if to smooth the folds; casually he moved away again, shoving his hands back into his pockets. "Now," said Mournful Andrews benignly, "I reckon everything's all set."

Fifteen seconds passed without event. Thirty seconds, and Shot moved restlessly but became quiet again. A quarter of a minute more—

With a squealing snort the bay gelding blew up. If Long Sweet had given a good sample of how hard a cayuse can fight, Shot now gave an imitation of a cast-iron wildcat gone mad. He pivoted, he sunfished, he bawled. He changed ends in mid-air, and in mid-air he shook himself like a wet dog. He all but pounded his rider apart with his savage stiff-legged jolts. And, when these things failed, he flung himself through the air, crashed down any old way on neck and shoulders, and rolled. Joe Gill flung himself clear, and was in the saddle as the horse struggled up.

A horse can not go on like that forever; and presently the effects of Mournful Andrews' 'perscription' began to wear off. At last Shot stood still, stiff-legged and sulky, temporarily whipped.

Joe Gill swung down slowly, and sopped a handkerchief at his bleeding nose. Then he ran a hand under the saddle blanket. Finding nothing, he smelled his gloved hand.

"Carbon bisulfide, huh?" he said looking Mournful Andrews in the eye.

"I dunno," said Mournful Andrews frankly. "I only know it smells somethin' terrible, an' makes a cold feel on your hand."

"Is this weak-kneed old plug the toughest horse you got?" Joe Gill demanded, turning to Whack-Ear.

"Yes," admitted Whack Ear, scratching his head, "I reckon he's as good as I can bring forward, just at the moment."

"I came here for a rest," said Joe Gill, "but I didn't know you boys rode nothin' but quiet old cart horses like this. I gotta find *some* excitement round here, and I guess maybe I'll start in by knockin' most of the sawdust out of this fat boy with the schoolgirl giggles."

Wobbling a little on his legs, Joe Gill advanced upon Mournful Andrews, while the moon-faced puncher stood staring in astonishment. At close range the contest man swung a well meant left at Mournful's jaw. Mournful ducked and sidestepped; and Joe Gill, lurching forward, collapsed to his hands and knees.

For a moment it seemed as if he were not going to be able to rise, and Dixie Kane stepped forward to give him a hand.

"Keep your lousy paws off me," snarled the contest man. "You're another one I'm goin' to thrash—in a little while."

He got to his feet unassisted, and strode with fair steadiness toward the bunkhouse.

"I guess he's quittin'," said Dixie Kane.

"Quittin'?" repeated Whack-Ear. "Him? He don't know how."

"Cowboy, cowboy," said Mournful Andrews, those rumbling irrepressible chuckles once more welling up into his throat. "I've seen Dixie Kane made a fool of two-three times, first to last, but never did I see him made to look so comical as this boy with the hot clothes made him look. Oh my gosh! I like to split—" Mournful Andrews went off into uncontrollable laughter.

"What become of your bad horse, Dixie?" asked Whack-Ear drily. "The one that you had such a big bother with last spring?"

For a moment Dixie stood silent, a baleful light in his youthful blue eyes.

"No grandstand hand can hang a thing like this on me!" he said at last. "I'll show that cheap circus tinhorn one or two things about this cow business yet, you mark my words, an' write 'em on the wall, where they can be seen plain!" He turned and strode off.

"Did yuh see the look on Dixie's face?" laughed Mournful. "Oh, gee-hee-hee—"

"Where do you get a snicker out o' this?"

Whack-Ear demanded. "Seems to me if I had my game called by a better man than me, and was called a fat boy with giggles, and was made to take a standin' broad jump backwards—why, I think I'd sing kind o' small!"

By sticking his hands in his pockets and whistling, Mournful Andrews tried to give an impression of large unconcern as he walked off after Dixie Kane.

"OLD MAN" RUTHERFORD sat, a big, gaunt figure with a granite face, in the combined living-room and office of his log cottage. He wore overalls and loose pull-off boots, and a flannel shirt open at the throat; a costume similar in every way to that of his hands. In some ways the years were beginning to tell on the Old Man. His wiry shock of hair was now an iron gray. The lean, rocky face was beginning to show a few deep-creased lines, carved there by the adversity of a good many blazing Augusts and blood-congealing Decembers. But, relaxed, it was a genial, humorous face, withal; and the keen, level grey eyes retained a surprizing amount of the enthusiasm of youth.

"Dixie," said Old Man Rutherford to the young bronc-peeler who stood before him, "in a good many ways you aren't much good."

Dixie Kane slowly reddened beneath his tan, and his eyes shifted nervously from the level gray gaze of the Old Man.

"No?" said he.

"No," the Old Man verified. "You got the swell-head."

Dixie's eyes returned to the Old Man's, and locked there.

"I'm a rider," he replied with resentment. "I never claimed to be anythin' different! An' if my ridin' ain't givin' satisfaction—"

"Time's come," Rutherford said, "when I got to make a development out at Lobo Springs. I got timber cut an' seasoned, an' lyin' there in stacks—enough to put up a good bunkhouse, an' cook shack, an' a stable. I got hay, some, an' more is on the way.

"I figger to put a man there to run that show an' build it up with his own hands, an' stick with it through —— an' high water spouts. The cattle business is changin' some, Dixie. Seems like we're goin' to have to be a little closer organized than the way we used to do, when things was more free an' easy. The man that shows me he can take hold of a bunch o' nothin' an' do somethin' with it, he's goin' to be permanent foreman out there, with a interest in the stock, bimeby, which same will be so figgered as to make a cattleman out o' him in the course o' time.

"You ain't near so good as yuh think, 'sfar's I can see. But I'm willin' yuh should show me yuh are, if yuh want. An' if yuh want to try a hard winter at Lobo Springs, I'll put yuh there, an' give yuh two riders—no cook—an' a couple o' hay shovelers when they're needed."

Dixie Kane pondered, his young blue eyes wandering somewhat hazily about the room, as he instinctively searched the proposition for its joker.

"Mister Rutherford," said he uncertainly, "I sure dunno what to say."

"Then that's settled. An' don't go bustin' in down at the bunkhouse shoutin' that you're now a foreman, either. I'll give yuh Mournful Andrews to start; an' Joe Gill, this contest man, for the other rider."

Doubt clouded Dixie's brow.

"Mister Rutherford, I dunno as I can do anythin' with that Joe Gill. He's the stuck-upest, no-count hand—"

"Talk loud, does he?"

"Well, he don't exactly talk—"

"If he gets funny, lick him. If he's like I think, it'll make a friend out o' him."

"I can lick him," said Dixie with a flash of insight; "but there's a feller that ain't goin' to stay licked. He'll always come 'unlicked,' as 'Whiskers' says."

"I got no one else for yuh," said the Old Man. "You'll just have to count him as one o' your many troubles. Try workin' his legs off him. Set him such a —— awful pace as'll show him you're the better man."

Dixie Kane considered this, and a certain gleam came into his eyes.

"Reckon that's worth tryin'," he agreed.

MOURNFUL ANDREWS strode with a swinging swagger from the makeshift corral to the little log shack that was the only building at Lobo Springs. He kicked the door open with a merry whoop, stepped inside, and shut the door with a back-swing of his heel. Then, abruptly, his manner changed.

"Good goshamighty," he whimpered, "I never see the like."

He hobbled stiffly and painfully to the nearest bunk, and very tenderly eased himself down upon the softest part of it. His plump face drooped in the lines of sagging weariness.

"Yuh look like yuh rode some," hazarded Dixie Kane.

"Rode?" repeated Mournful, with a faint moan. "I never pounded leather more consistent in one day in my life. And that after stayin' out till pretty near mornin' last night!"

"Is he weakenin' any, Mournful?" asked Dixie, eyeing his partner intently.

"Weakenin'? Oh my ——!" replied Mournful almost tearfully. "Two-three hours ago I says, 'Guess we better start back,' an' he says, 'Why, it won't be dark for three hours yet!' Just like that. I says, 'Well, we got to save the horses.' 'Oh,' says he, 'I thought we'd prob'ly ride back after dark, like we done yesterday!' "

"What kind o' feller is this?" marveled Dixie, his face haunted by misgivings.

"Dixie," said Mournful, "he's just plain, cussed obstinate. This pace is pretty near killin' that boy. His pan was white as a sheet when he got down. He had to grab hold of a post to get his balance. When I pulled out them raw sowbelly sandwiches today he was so tired an' sick he could hardly touch 'em."

"How much ground did yuh cover?" asked Dixie, his mind momentarily reverting to the actual accomplishment of work. Mournful told him, and Dixie emitted a low whistle. "And tallied all stock as yuh rode?"

"We done so," said Mournful forcibly. "An' if there's one lone doggie that we missed in that part of our range, he musta buried himself while we passed. This takin' a cow-census separate and apart and followin' the round-up is the biggest fool thing I ever see; and besides, it's impossible!"

"No it ain't," said Dixie. "The Old Man's right. He has to put his hay where it's needed—an' we already showed his guess is off two thousand head in this camp. And anyway," he added, "how could we show this grandstand hand up if we didn't have no work?"

"The Old Man never expected us to actually make the count. I think he was jokin'. Anyway, he only said to do it if we couldn't think o' nothin' else."

"Just the same," said Dixie doggedly, "it's goin' to help us pull through the stock, if it is a crazy idee."

"You sure have changed some," said Mournful wonderingly. Then, "Dixie, Gill is on to our game, if he does act so innercent and acceptin'. He knows as well as you do this ain't no regular siege o' work, this time o' year!"

"What did he say?" Dixie demanded.

"Just one thing. He says, 'I guess Dixie's restin' today,' he says. 'I s'pose he'll take his turn ridin' with me tomorrow!"

Dixie Kane stared. Then he slammed the coffee pot on to the stove and rubbed his hands on his overalls, as if the pot had been the source of the revolting information.

"Did he say that?" he foamed.

"He done so," Mournful declared.

"Well, that settles it!" Dixie burst out. "From now on I'm goin' to lead this boy through a batch of misery personal. If he's a pig for punishment, I'm a hawg for it, an' if he hangs to *my* coat-tails he'll keep movin' till he drops in his tracks!"

"I ain't quittin'," said Mournful sullenly. "No contest softy is goin' to outdo me, neither. I can show this boy what a whirlwind o' hard work means—an' mebbe I'll show you somethin' too, Dixie, my boy!"

"Start by gettin' us somethin' to eat," suggested Dixie, reaching for his hat. "It ain't too dark to see, yet. I'll show that boy a few things about hand-operatin' a ax!"

Dixie Kane found Joe Gill sitting on a log, his head on his arms, slumped in a posture of utter exhaustion. The slender contest hand sprang up, however, as Dixie approached.

"Not tired?" asked Dixie Kane, lifting his eyebrows in a simulation of surprize.

"Not me," declared Joe Gill. "I was just thinkin' we might be gettin' in some good work here with the ax."

"My idee exactly," said Dixie. "We got everything we need to go into a first-class bunkhouse, an' we're goin' to rassle one out o' these logs right now."

"Fine!" said Joe Gill. He grinned at Dixie broadly—but without warmth.

AS THE days passed uncounted, Mournful Andrews' face began to lose some of its moon-like rotundity. Another hole had to be put into his belt with the harness punch. But although he now laughed less frequently than before, there were still times when the old familiar chuckles would not be downed.

"Honest, there's times when I pretty near die," he told Dixie Kane one morning as he got breakfast. Joe Gill was somewhere outside. "Sometimes when I see the expression on your face I pretty near split. Puts me in mind o' the look on my chestnut horse, the time he took Perk Snyder by the nape o' the shirt, an'—"

"The layout o' your pan is nothin' to pin a medal on," Dixie Kane retorted obscurely. "Nowadays you go round lookin' like yuh swallered somebody else's plug o' tobaccy, and was tryin' not to let on."

"What gets me," said Mournful, sobering, "is that he don't seem to weaken, much."

"He is weakenin'," affirmed Dixie.

"He ain't."

"He is!"

"Ain't!"

"He's losin' weight!"

"He's gainin'!"

"Losin'!"

"Gainin'!"

"Be that as it may," conceded Dixie grimly, "we been goin' at this thing hind end to. All I can say for this program we been carryin' out is that it sure has changed the look o' the camp, what with the new bunkhouse all ready for the shake roof, an' the corral, an' the temp'ry granary. No three fellers ever did as much work as we done, Mournful."

"When I think of it I'm plumb ashamed," Mournful agreed. "Me that allus called myself a rider!"

"An' he's worked—don't think he ain't," Dixie went on. "We done these contest hands wrong, Mournful. Grantin' he can't sock a ax home like me, I've seen him hang on when he couldn't hardly get the ax over his head. Next time I start out to race somebody, I ain't goin' to start."

"I ain't licked," said Mournful. "I ain't only just begun. No contest hand can come in here an' —"

"We gone too far to quit," said Dixie. "We've done our best to drop him in his tracks, an' well he knows it. But Mr. Kane has a stunt or two yet. Today we ride."

"Thank——!" exclaimed Mournful.

"Don't think Gill will say the same," declared Dixie. "Nor mebbe you won't, neither, come the end o' the week. It's still too early to look for weak stock, the snow holdin' off this way. So we're goin' after fuzz-tails. An' if so we get some, we'll turn these saddlers loose, an' ride nothin' but the spookiest kind o' stock. An' when I say we're goin' to ride, I mean ride, in the extremest sense o' the word."

"Goshamighty," said Mournful. "I sure headed into misery when I come here."

"I figure we got two weeks for this at the outside. An' if we don't cork this boy this time, I got to admit that for the present I'm beat."

Joe Gill came in, and abruptly the conversation closed. The slender contest hand wore overalls and sheepskin now; all that remained of his former glory was the heavy hat with the carved leather band, still riding cockily atop. The pallor of his face had weathered somewhat by now, but still showed a grayish cast in contrast with the ruddy complexions of the other men. His blue eyes were tired and bloodshot, and there was no basis for Mournful's claim that Joe Gill was gaining weight.

Breakfast was a silent meal. Afterwards, as they saddled, there was a certain suggestion of grim purpose in the movements of Mournful Andrews and Dixie Kane, the determination of men who, having started out to show another up, find themselves in grave danger of being outgamed.

Joe Gill was the first to mount; and as he mounted, the slow, grinding struggle of wills came abruptly to an end.

As soon as the contest hand had settled into the saddle Long Sweet bucked. It was not the vicious, explosive bucking of an enraged or terrified horse; only the brisk crow-hopping that is conceded to be every cow horse's privilege when the morning is cold. Kane and Andrews proceeded with their saddling, not conceiving Long Sweet's efforts to be worthy of attention. But suddenly they saw Joe Gill slump over the horse's ears to the ground, where he lay as he fell.

Dixie and Mournful exchanged a glance, half of triumph and half of surprize, as they hurried to the fallen man.

"This thing's drawin' to a close," said Dixie Kane.

They straightened out Gill's unconscious form, finding nothing wrong. And presently the prostrate enemy opened his eyes.

"What's the matter?" he asked vaguely.

"I don't know, exactly," said Dixie Kane.

"Yuh musta fainted or somethin'. Anyway, yuh fell off."

"Feel all right?" asked Mournful, not unkindly, but with a twinkle in his eye.

"I guess so," said Gill.

They helped him up and caught his horse.

"It's the beginnin' o' the end," whispered Dixie to Mournful as they walked away.

He was wrong; it was the end itself.

Gill got one foot into the stirrup, and made as if to mount. Then suddenly the tears sprang into his eyes, and he walked away. Presently the others followed.

They found him lying on his back in his bunk, his face a mask.

"Boys," said Joe Gill, "I'm beat. I come into this ranch life too late. I thought I could stick it out, but it can't be done."

"How so?" asked Dixie Kane, looking at Mournful with contentment in his eyes.

"It was that black —— at Tucson," said Joe Gill, his voice bitter. "He tried to do for me, he did, and I wish to —— he had."

"What are yuh talkin' about?" demanded Dixie Kane suddenly, his face startled.

"When I got out o' the hospital they told me I wasn't to ride no more. I was to take it easy, so they said. So I thought—"

"Hospital?" repeated Dixie. "When?"

"Just before I came here," said Gill.

"Good ——!" swore Dixie.

"I guess I'll save what ridin' I got left for the rodeos," Gill was saying. "It ain't so much harder, and they pay better there."

But they didn't hear him; they were looking at each other again, but this time in a new way.

"Let me ask just one more thing," said Dixie at last. "What's the reason yuh didn't take the doc's advice an' lay up for a while?"

There was a long silence; until they thought the contest man was not going to reply.

"I got a girl," began Gill finally, "an' I thought— Aw, what's the use? You go to ——, Kane."

"WHAT'S the lowest thing in the world?" brooded Dixie Kane presently. He sat on a log behind the new bunkhouse that had cost so much in nerve and sweat, his gloved fingers idly tearing up wisps of straw. "I want to go tell it that it's been promoted one step up. If there's anythin' as slimy low an' yaller mean as me, I want to know its name. I wish to —— I was dead."

His comments ended in an embittered series of blasphemous remarks.

For a moment a shadow of the old twinkle appeared in Mournful Andrews' face.

"When I seen the change come over your face, I pretty near—" he began, but his voice trailed off— "You an' me both," he concluded in a different key.

Dixie got up, walked listlessly to his horse, and mounted.

"Where yuh goin'?" asked Mournful Andrews.

"Do some work, I guess," said Dixie without expression.

Mournful hesitated, then walked to his own horse, and followed Dixie's example. Dixie guided his horse away from the buildings, his eyes avoiding the bunkhouse as self-consciously as if its rough-hewn logs had formed an accusing face. Then the jogging of his horse brought him to life, and his disgust with himself exploded into volcanic wrath. It was the horse that paid for that. Dixie's quirt slashed the animal's flank.

"Leave here!" snarled the man.

It was two hours later when the two men returned to Lobo Springs. They came in at a walk, Dixie already ashamed of his manner of relieving his own temper at the expense of his mount. Dixie dismounted before the bunkhouse, threw the reins over his horse's head, and strode toward the door with calm steadiness and decision in his eye.

"Joe," began Dixie, throwing open the door.

Joe Gill was gone. So, they found, was his war bag, his saddle, and his horse.

OLD MAN RUTHERFORD bent over a sheet of paper, intent on columns of figures which he revised and tinkered at with a long pencil which he occasionally wet in his mouth. His left hand gripped a handful of his graying hair. Thus anchored, the hand looked less as if it were supporting the big head than as if it were holding the head down to its distasteful work.

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" yelled the Old Man.

Joe Gill entered, hesitantly. As if on second thought, he stepped back to park his hat on the porch outside the door; then came in and closed the door after him.

"Oh hello, Gill," said Rutherford. "Come after supplies?"

"Why," said Gill, "I thought I'd draw—"

"Gill," said Old Man Rutherford, "I ain't much to pass out flatterin' remarks. But when I heard from Whack-Ear how much you boys got done at Lobo Springs, I swear yuh could have knocked me over with a medjum-sized ax. I had no idee you boys would actually count the cattle. I figgered you'd be too busy playin' seven up to get to a thing like that. An' when it comes to three riders buildin' a bunkhouse, an' a granary, an' a corral, —actually usin' axes! —I swear it plumb passes beyond belief."

"Yeah?" said Joe Gill. "Well, I guess I'll draw my pay an' quit."

"Quit?" repeated Rutherford. "From what I'd heard, I'd kind o' gathered that yuh wasn't the quittin' kind. Whatsamatter now?"

"I know when I'm beat," said Gill stoically. "I'm quittin'—while I still can."

Rutherford looked at him for a moment, his eyes showing just the faintest trace of contempt.

"Suit yourself," he said, and reached for his check book.

There was another brief knock at the door; but before the Old Man could answer it, the door swung open to admit Dixie Kane. The bronc-peeler stopped with a shock as he sighted Joe Gill; then took a fresh grip upon himself and came forward more slowly.

"I see one of your riders is quittin', Dixie," said the Old Man. "Leavin' Lobo Springs."

Dixie Kane glanced at Joe Gill.

"No he ain't," he said shortly. "It's *me* that's through at the Springs!"

Rutherford threw down the check book with a slap.

"Seems to be catchin'," he exploded. "You've been with me since yuh had to be lifted into the saddle, an' I never before seen yuh quit when there was somethin' tough to be done!"

"I'm quittin' now," said Dixie, fiddling with his hat.

"I'm —— if yuh are!" boomed the Old Man. "What's the idee? This here's a real opportunity for yuh. It gives yuh more pay, an' a interest in some stock. It gives yuh a chance to show guts an make good! It'll learn yuh more about the cattle business than plain an' fancy ridin' could ever do, an' leads up to makin' a cattle man of yuh in the end!"

"Ain't fitted," said Dixie.

"You're better fitted than any three men I ever see! Tallyin' cattle, an' puttin' up buildin's, an'—"

"I've got somethin' to tell yuh," said Dixie. "Mournful an' me done all that extra work just to cork Joe. We've worked day an' night, with just that one thing in mind—to kill off that man, with bad horses an' pore grub an'—"

"An' you're lettin' 'em *do* it?" Old Man Rutherford demanded of Joe.

"Listen!" snapped Dixie Kane, in a voice that made the Old Man start with surprize. "Joe Gill was done up by a killer at the Tucson rodeo. He come here straight from the hospital, with the doc's orders to never ride again. D'yuh see what I done?"

"Joe Gill," said the Old Man in his deep voice, "is that statement correct?"

"Give me my pay," begged Joe, "and let me go!"

"You listen to me!" grated Dixie, leaning over the table toward Rutherford. "I'm quittin' in favor of a better man than me. You put me up to workin' him to death, an' now yuh gotta play up same as me. An' if yuh ain't got enough sense to —"

"Whoa up!" said Rutherford. "I'll run this show!— But this time you're right. Yep. Gill, you'll have a crack at runnin' Lobo Springs. An' if yuh don't know much to start, I reckon this is where you'll sure learn!"

"No," said Gill.

"What!"

"I don't take anybody's charity," said Joe.

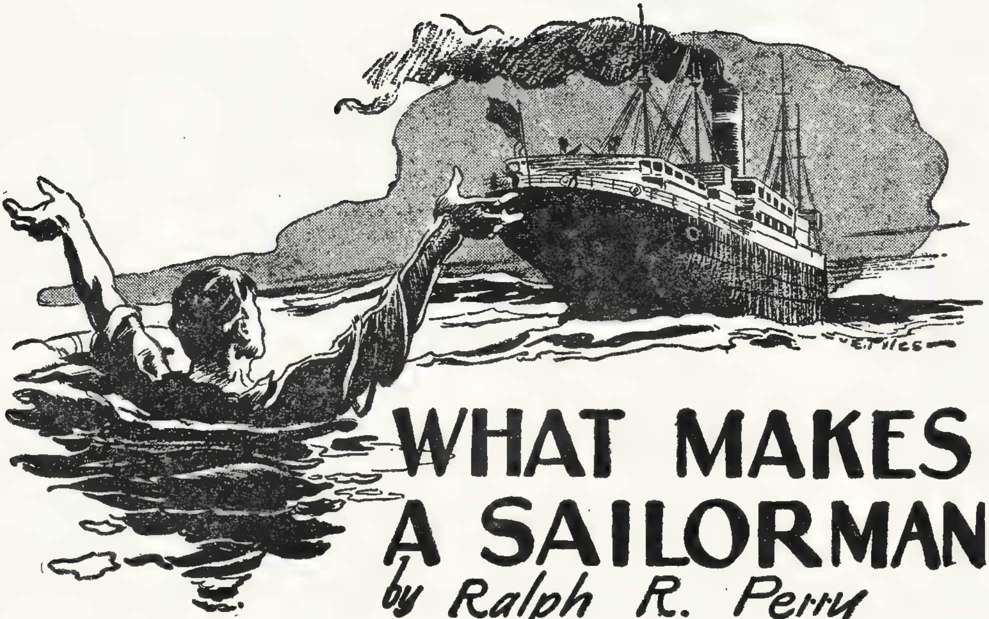
Rutherford rose up, towering behind his table, and his voice rose to a mighty roar.

"I won't have my plans upset by no notions of a lot o' young squirts!" he bellowed. "When I say somethin', it sticks! Joe, you get out o' here, an' take the day to rest up. An' see that tomorrow mornin' finds yuh on the way to Lobo Springs!"

"I guess I'd rather—" Joe Gill began.

"Get out!" thundered Rutherford.

Gill went.



WHAT MAKES A SAILORMAN

by Ralph R. Perry

Author of "Stowed Away," "The Code of East and West," etc.

"YAH hurryin' to git back to yer farm, Joe, or tryin' to jump out of them boots?" the boatswain sang out.

Joe turned his head toward him and grinned, a kind of half-hearted, dumb grin, as if he wasn't sure whether "Boats" was kidding him or not, but he kept right on trotting up the deck. That was Joe to the life. He was a puzzle to all of us in the forecastle, and even then, when we'd made a voyage with him and were only two hours' sail from New York, we couldn't savvy him at all.

There was Joe, running; his oilskins half on, and carrying his sou-wester in his hand. It had just gone four bells in the forenoon watch, and he was a minute or so late in relieving the wheel, so he ran. It was raining buckets. It was Joe's last watch, for he'd told us he'd money enough saved to leave the ship and go back to fix up his farm, but rather than be ten seconds late Joe preferred to get wet instead of stopping to put on his hat and button his coat.

He had just reached the ladder leading to the bridge, sliding and stumbling when he ran because his rubber boots were three sizes too big for him, when he noticed the *Agwan's* gig was working loose in its chocks. Any sailor but Joe would have gone on by, or else yelled back to tell the boatswain it ought to be secured, but Joe stops, with the rain sluicing and spattering off the shoulders of his oilskins as he bent down, and starts to tauten the lashings. He crowded in between the stern of the boat and the ship's rail. Perhaps it was the long swell that was making the *Agwan* roll like a log. Maybe his foot slipped on the wet deck. We were all watching him, and none of us could tell how it happened—but he fell overboard.

He gave a yell of terror, shrill and frantic as the scream of a horse, that ended with a *glug* as a wave reached up and gathered him in. On the bridge our third mate, Newcombe, caught a glimpse of Joe falling, his big boots uppermost, and his arms flailing as he snatched at the thin air. The mate's jaw dropped and the quarter-master heard him grunt and watched him stare—stare fascinated with his arms hanging helpless at his sides till Joe's head bobbed up in the white wake of the ship. Then, when the screw would have made mincemeat of Joe if he hadn't been lucky enough to fall far out from the ship's side, Newcombe snapped out of his hop and jumped to the engine-room telegraphs. Full speed astern he rang, and yelled for the boatswain to get over a lifeboat till his face was red as a beet. Slow? ——, he was slow; Newcombe was always slow. Joe would have drowned forty times, for he couldn't swim a stroke, if his boots hadn't been so big that they were sucked off his feet when the thrust of the screw flung him to the surface, and if Boats hadn't been standing next a life preserver aft, plucked it from the rail, and thrown it right into Joe's hands as they beat at the water.

Of course, with Newcombe as late reversing the engines as he was, the ship went nearly a quarter mile on her course before she stopped and began to back up; but for a while the mate could see Joe's head and shoulders bobbing around, black against the wake. Why, for awhile every man of the ship could hear him yelling. Then the *Agwan* turned to starboard to make a lee for the lifeboat, the rain came down harder than ever and Joe's head was just one of a thousand black specks on a gray sea. Newcombe lifted his eyes to check the steering and couldn't find him again. He bawled for his glasses, and stood fumbling with them, the water pouring down the sleeves of his oilskin coat and running down his neck, for he'd tossed aside his sou'wester to see better.

"Keep yer eye on him, lookout!" Newcombe bawled, and cursed Joe for falling overboard. "Ain't you ever goin' to get that lifeboat away? Cast off the lashin's, you —— slugs."

"Stand by your falls, Johansen! Into the boat the crew—cross your lifelines, she's going to sally—now, lower away," the boatswain ordered. "Let that —— officer yell," he muttered under his breath. "He ain't no good. Look at him playin' solitaire with his glasses!"

"Steady on your lowerin'—fend off with your oars there or she'll smash against the ship's side," yelled Captain Garrison from the bridge.

He was jumping up and down, waving his fat arms over his head and bawling six orders at once.

"Let be!" growled Boats, too low for the Old Man to hear. "She ain't swingin', the old fat head—mind your tackles—unhook aft—give way, —— you, give away!"

And rowing pretty ragged, the lifeboat pulled away from the ship, with Boats standing up to the steering oar, spittin' the rain water out of his mouth and cursing us for a bunch of twentieth century farmers because we didn't row to suit him. There was quite a sea running, and I, for one, hadn't pulled an oar for more'n two years, even if I do hold a lifeboatman's ticket, and it was raining like the bull of Barney. Ordinarily rain don't amount to much, but this was solid. It washed down over your face and ran into your eyes till you couldn't see.

It wasn't five minutes before we could hear the water sloshing around under the bottom boards, and Stitson, at the bow, starts to yell we've sprung a leak. The Boats shut him up quick enough, but two hundred yards away from the ship and we had no more idea where Joe had got to than the ship's cook or Charley Noble. Boats tucked the steering oar under his arm and wiped the water out of his eyes, stood on tiptoe to look ahead, and then squinted back at the ship to see if he could get a line on her wake. But she'd come around in the trough of the sea by this time, and we'd no idea which way she'd been headed when Joe did his flop. At the oars, we were rowing our arms out, for we liked Joe; but we began to wonder if we'd ever find him. Back at the ship a couple of signal flags were hoisted, and Boats cussed.

"Yeah," he said, "that's some of Newcombe's stuff! Signals to lifeboats. Row port or starboard or straight ahead—fine, if I knew what they meant. Any of you seagoing painters know the international code?"

He looked at us, worried and hopeful. I kind of remembered something about those signals, but I couldn't be sure.

"That means more to starboard, I think, Boats," I said.

"Yah think!" he growled at me. "Yah don't know nothing about it, do yah?"

"Maybe we can hear him yellin'," suggests Stitson, from the bow.

"Up oars and listen," ordered Boats.

WE WAITED. Back on the ship we could see Newcombe leaning on the rail, still fooling around with his glasses, and when we stopped rowing the Old Man started waving his arms over his head some more. But we waited, wiping the water off our faces, and trying to listen. But all we could hear was that steady *ss-ss-ss* of the rain on the water. Finally, I see the lookout lean way out of the crow's nest, and point, wave to us a bit, and point again.

"He's off to port, according to the lookout, Boats," I said.

He grinned back at me, for I'd guessed the flags meant starboard, and gave the orders to get under way. We rowed what must have been a quarter of a mile, one eye on the lookout, and then we heard a yell from the sea ahead, and there was Joe.

We figured on finding him scared to death, for he had been yelling like a stuck pig, and to go overboard at sea is no picnic any way you look at it; but he was just giving a good loud hail about every thirty seconds. When we drew alongside he was so pale his face was green—I reckon he'd swallowed about a gallon of salt water—but outside of that he was "Farmer" Joe, cool and stupid-looking as you please.

"I lost my boots," was the first thing he yelled at us.

"Yeah, and you got us all out here in the rain, and me without my oilskins," said Boats. "Wait till I get you back to the ship, Joe!"

That was all there was to it. Stitson pulled him aboard, and Joe came aft and sat on the stern sheets, spittin' the salt out of his mouth and trying to wipe his big, slab chin dry with his hand. He told us he'd come off a farm somewhere in Kentucky. He was only a boy twenty, maybe, and he said the work had been too hard. Sitting there, his clothes sticking to him, his fingernails blue with cold, his hair plastered to his face and his pale gray eyes staring back at me as if he wanted to know what it was all about, he looked as though he'd like to be back on the farm, work or no work.

"I thought I was going to die," he grunted at last, looking up at Boats like a big dog.

"Yeah, and you'll wish you had when they get through jawing you back at the ship. How'd you fall overboard, you dumbhead?"

"I dunno," Joe said, and he shut up sullen and tight as a clam.

We all had something to say—we were tired and wet, rowing; and Joe sat there and took it, his elbows on his knees, staring back at the ship, never saying a word, but with the muscles of his jaw writhing and bunching till I thought he was going to get up and try to fight the whole crew. He was the kind that would have tried, but it took a lot to get Joe fighting mad. He just sat in the boat, the rain running down the back of his neck, until we got to the ship.

The waves were pretty high; not breaking on account of the rain; but rising in a long swell that would lift the lifeboat half way to the rail and then drop way down till the ship's side towered above us high as a house. The blocks of the hoisting tackles were swinging around, big as a man's head, and liable to brain you if you weren't careful. We had a lively time—stumbling around over the thwarts, batting the blocks away with our fists, trying to keep the boat from smashing against the ship's side by fending off with our oars, cussing to show what brave sailors we were, and praying inside that the tackles would be hooked on together. I, for one, didn't want to fall into that gray-green water while I was wearing boots and oilers. All the time the Old Man was leaning over the rail, waving his arms and yelling at us. Mighty easy for him to give orders! We had to carry 'em out.

Boats had gone forward, and had his block ready to hook, but I couldn't get mine. Three times we came up on a wave, and Boats was ready to hook on, looked back at me and saw the block twisting out of my hands, and passed up his chance. If a boat isn't hooked forward and aft at the same time in a sea like that the bow or stern will be carried up into the air, and everybody 'll be spilled. Hooking on is a thing it don't pay to miss, and I was so nervous I don't think I ever could have done it. All at once, some one shoved me out of the way, and Joe took my place. We were rising on the fourth sea, and he grabbed the block, twisted it straight in his big hands, looked forward quick to see that Boats was ready. Both of them nods, and they hook on seamanlike as you please. The tackles snapped taut with a jerk and a whine as the wave dropped away beneath us, leaving the boat in the air, and the crew hoisted us to the deck. Joe climbed the lifelines with the rest and dropped aboard, without hat or boots, the water streaming off the white socks he always wore.

"You dumbhead!" Captain Garrison roared at him. "You no-account, thick-headed farmer!"

Joe got red, and the muscles began to dance around his jaw again, for he *was* a farmer, so, of course, it made him mad to be called one. Captain Garrison was a fat little man with blue pop-eyes, about a foot shorter than Joe; and it's no fun for a big man to stand and listen to the names the captain was calling him—when if they'd been ashore Joe could have knocked the skipper forty feet with one hand tied. But they were not on shore.

"I didn't mean to do it, sir. It wasn't any fun for me," Joe said finally.

His voice was so low you could hardly hear it, and all the while the skipper had been talking he'd been getting whiter and whiter. I was standing right behind him, for I was afraid he'd take a swing at the Old Man. Not that I'd a-blamed him, but—well, hitting an officer is mutiny, and you can't get away with that.

The captain rose up on his tiptoes, his fists waving over his head, and puffed out his cheeks till I thought they'd bust. Then his hands dropped, and he came down on his heels with a bang, and commenced to talk, low and cold and nasty.

"Dumbhead Joe, that's you!" he said.

Now we'd called Joe a dumbhead, mostly because he was slow of speech, but as the captain said it it made your teeth grit together and your fists clench.

"You call yourself a sailor! A sailor—you that falls overboard in a calm sea. You ain't fit to eat burned pea soup. You ain't got the head, or the hands, or the feet of a sailor. Look at them white socks! White socks—even your clothes ain't clean. A sailor's handy, you lummox. He's savvy. He waits for orders and obeys them—and you, you hayseed, you—"

The captain said just two words more. Fighting words, anywhere in the world.

"That's enough, sir," said Joe.

"Hey?" shouted the skipper. "Give me lip, will you!"

He hauled back his fat fist and hit Joe in the mouth. Hard enough to cut his lip, just as hard as the Old Man knew how to hit; but he was too fat and too mad to knock as big a chap as Joe down. Joe swung back his fist. He'd have killed the skipper, I think, but when his hand swung back I caught it and tripped him, so that he fell on his back on the wet deck. The skipper must have thought he'd knocked him down, for he stood over Joe, grinning and pleased with himself.

"That'll teach you, Dummy," he said. "Now get some dry clothes on and come forward. It's your trick at the wheel. Get a move on."

THEN the Old Man walked away, leaving Joe lying on his back, and the crew standing in a ring around him with the rain sluicing off their oilskins, each of us trying not to let Joe see us looking at him. He lay there for ten seconds, maybe; then he got up rather slowly.

"I'll kill you for that," he said to the captain's back.

He didn't yell it out. He whispered it, almost under his breath, and every one of us knew he meant to do it, too. We couldn't think of anything to say. Joe was slow, but you know how that slow kind are when they get mad. Hell itself—no—no jail and the little green door that leads into the electric chair in the big house, won't stop them. We just stood there, wishing we could kid him out of it. It was the Boats, I think, that saved a murder.

"——, Joe, that gas-bag ain't worth shooting," he said with a kind of chuckle. "Get some dry clothes on and a cup of coffee."

"You heard what he called me?" Joe asked, low and fierce.

Boats looked Joe up and down, and bit off a big chew of tobacco before he answered, so that Joe had time to feel foolish while he waited.

"Yeah, I heard him," he answered at last. "Joe, at sea, them words is the beginning of love talk. It just means the Old Man is sore, and excitable. Huh, he called you no sailor, too—which is funny, comin' from a man who loses his head as complete as the skipper does. You've made a fool of yourself once today, boy, lemme tell you. Don't make yourself a worse one. He didn't log you any pay, did he?"

"I'll see him in ——!" said Joe.

"That's better—that's lots better," crows the Boats, slapping him on the back. "Likely you will at that! Come on forward, Joe, and I'll lend you some dry socks. Why boy, did I ever tell you of the time I fell overboard off Hatteras? Day lot like this, but blowing harder, it was—"

They moved off together, and the rest of us followed like the procession behind a hearse. But I didn't like the look Joe had around his mouth.

There wasn't a word said in the forecastle while we were changing clothes. I'd have given a dollar, cash, to have some one make a crack, and tried to think of something to say myself, but the words wouldn't come. One by one, we pulled on our wet boots over our dry socks, and went topside, those who were on watch, that is. Boats was waiting for me on deck.

"It's getting foggy," he says. "You go keep an extra lookout on the bridge."

"On the bridge? In daytime?" I asked; surprized, for that's not usual. "What's the matter with the bow, if you need an extra man? I can't see no more from the bridge than the mate can."

"Mr. Newcombe's orders," raps back Boats, short and precise, as if he could have said a whole lot more. He thought a minute. "I know you ought to be in the bow," he says. "But while Joe's got the wheel it's just as well to have you handy. I saw you catch his fist. Keep an eye on him, boy—and be glad this fog'll keep the Old Man too busy to ride him."

It wasn't really a fog at first. Mist and fallin' rain, as it says in the international rules, but for all that, we'd started the fog horn going, and when I got up on the bridge and looked ahead it was hard to tell just how far you could see. The rain was in your eyes, a mist was rising from the water, and the clouds were low, so that there was a kind of dirty gray wall all around you, with the ship in the center. Newcombe and the skipper were both inside the wheel house, with Joe rubbing away at the glass forward to see better; and I went out on the port bridge wing, and watched them more'n I did the sea ahead. Your ears are more use than your eyes in a fog, anyhow.

They weren't saying anything in the wheel house, but it seemed to me that even outside I could feel the tension in the air—that grim kind of silence that makes your back crawl. Newcombe was edged into a corner, and every once in a while he'd look at Joe and show his teeth. I knew the skipper'd been bawling him to a fare-you-well for the slow way he'd gotten the lifeboat over, and he was blaming Joe for it, and wishing he had a chance to take it out of him. The skipper was right in front of the wheel, and every minute he'd turn and take a quick look at Joe, then peer out through the port again. I think he could feel Joe's eyes on the back of his neck.

Joe was a wonder as a helmsman. He didn't seem to watch the compass at all. Once in a while the wheel would twitch in his big hands, but mostly he stood stock still, as though he weren't actually doing anything at all. Only he gripped the spokes as though it was the captain's throat. His knuckles showed white, pink-white, minute after minute; until I began to wonder how long it would be before he got a cramp in his forearms. He'll have to let up in another second, I kept saying to myself, he'll have to let up. But he didn't. Half an hour went by, the whistle booming over our head every two minutes. Beyond that, not a sound, not a word; and the fog massing before our bow, thick as cotton wool, reaching out clammy feelers that swept slowly across our eyes.

Then, so suddenly it made me jump, came a *ding* of the bell the masthead lookout uses to get the attention of the bridge. The Old Man jumped to the voice-tube and listened; slammed down the port in front of him and leaned far out, one ear cocked. His eye fell on me.

"What d'ye think this is, a roof garden?" he snarled. "There's a ship out there. Why the —— didn't you report it?"

"I haven't heard nothing, sir," I said.

Then our whistle boomed, and for four seconds I couldn't hear myself think. With that blast still ringing in my ears, I tried to listen, hard, so that it hurt inside my head. Sure enough, maybe just for the fraction of a second, I thought I heard a whistle ahead—just a whisper of sound, as though she'd blown at the same instant we did.

"Did you hear anything," called the Old Man, commencing to dance up and down on his toes. "Where was it? Answer, —— you! Are you stone deaf?"

"Dead ahead, I think sir," I reported. "Or now, maybe a point to starboard."

THE Old Man frowned, and his red face began to get white at the corners of his nose. I didn't blame him. Of course, I'm no officer; but I know the rules of the road, and I've stood watch with a plenty of mates. Say what you like; gales, shallow water—there's nothing as bad as meeting ships in thick fog. You can't see. You can't be sure the other ship will really be where you think you hear its whistle. The sound may strike a thicker bank of fog and echo, so that the ship may be coming down on your starboard hand to smash clear through your side, when she sounds dead ahead.

When you do see her, you'll have maybe thirty, maybe one-half a second to make up your mind what to do—and if you make a mistake, a bunch of fat steamboat inspectors, sitting around a table in comfortable chairs and talking it over for hours, will take away your license because they decide that what you did was wrong, now that it's all over and they know you sank the other ship.

"Where is she—can you hear her?" the Old Man whispers.

"No sir," I whispers back, and took a quick look at Joe.

His face was set; his eye was on the compass, and he was steering straight down his course. He didn't seem to care what happened.

Our whistle went again, and just after it stopped we heard the other ship. Faint, still; but distinct this time. It was a big hoarse whistle, probably a liner; and it was a little bit on our starboard bow.

"Stop the engines," the Old Man ordered, and for a minute or two we drifted along, the whole ship quiet as a tomb, with Joe looking mad because it was hard to keep the ship on her course as she lost steerage way.

"She won't answer her helm, sir," he said to the Old Man at last, talking as though it hurt him to speak.

The Old Man kicked at the deck, and rang for slow speed. I could see he hated to go ahead; he hated to take any responsibility, but he had to. As far as he knew that other ship was coming down on our starboard bow, and it was up to us to keep away from her. According to sea law—though she was just as worried about us as we were about her—she would have to hold her course until we actually came in sight.

"Can you see her—can you see her?" whispered the Old Man.

All I could see was a contemptuous curl of Joe's lip at the skipper's anxiety. Then her whistle blew right in our faces. One second there was nothing ahead of us but a mass of dirty gray fog; the next second, there was the ship. She was painted gray. Dark gray against that gray fog, her outline blurred and fuzzy. Maybe a mile away, she was, and even in that first second she seemed to rise out of the fog like a bad dream. Just a little bit on our starboard hand, coming right down on us.

If she was heading a little across our bow, we were going to cut her in half unless we put our helm hard aport, backed hard on the starboard engines, and used helm and engines together to fling our ship to the right. But—if she wasn't heading across our bow, if she was steaming on a parallel course to us, and we swung off to the right she was going to cut us in two. And she was close. It takes time, minutes, to change the course of a big ship; and in another two minutes, both of us steaming together, we were going to hit.

Oh, I know, when you're sitting in an armchair, a crisis like that is an easy thing to figure out. All you've got to do is to take a sight along the masts of the other ship, and if they're not in line, you can tell which way she's heading. Yes, that's all you've got to do. I looked. My mouth felt like it was filled with hot copper. The bottom had dropped out of my stomach. I was sick. I tell you—gray fog, and gray masts against them. I could see her foremast, but I couldn't make out whether the mast behind it was right, or left, or straight behind. To the right, and we'd sink her. To the left, we were safe. Straight ahead and she'd sink us. That foremast danced before my eyes. It was so bad that even if we did have only seconds to make up our mind, and though the skipper was yelling—

"How's she heading—how's she heading?" to me, I turned away to rest my eyes.

The lookout's bell was ringing as if he'd gone mad, but no one had any time to pay any attention to him. The Old Man was leaning half out of the port, his face gray as the fog. Newcombe might as well not have been there. He was in the corner with his shoulders pulled up by his ears, his mouth open, with the lower lip drawn back so that his teeth showed white, staring at the captain's back like a scared cur. Joe's big hands gripped the wheel, his feet were braced wide apart, and his chin was stuck out as he looked out over the skipper's back at the other ship. It struck me he was pleased. There was a cold grin coming and going around the corner of his mouth, and as I looked he shut his teeth with a snap, gave a quick, grim nod to himself—and then dropped his eyes to the compass card and went on steering, white and cold and deadly as a tombstone. It came to me he wanted the Old Man to wreck his own ship or ram the stranger. It would ruin the skipper, and for that Joe'd take his chances of getting picked up when we collided. Hate like that scared me.

"How's she heading? How's—" the skipper's voice broke. He had to swallow before he could finish and croak out, "—she heading?"

I couldn't see. Newcombe looked, his jaw lolling open.

"I don't know—hadn't we better port helm?" he stammered.

THE Old Man gripped at the window frame with both hands, and his fat shoulders shook. He had to do something, and the decision wracked him. His face worked, and he swallowed twice before he was able to speak at all.

"Port helm, hard a-port," he choked.

Joe never raised his head from the compass. His hands tightened on the wheel, but it didn't move.

"Hard a-port!" screamed the Old Man.

Joe never raised his head, but he grinned. I never want to see such a look on a man's face again. He had gotten the skipper in his power, just as though he had a bug under his heel, and he was about to shift his weight and crunch it. His right shoulder dropped, and for a flash I thought he was going to whirl the helm to port. Then he looked up, facing the skipper eye to eye.

"Like —— I port," he said.

The skipper was too surprized to move. Before he could act, Joe spoke again, cold and sullen.

"I was going to, but I won't. You ain't worth it." His right hand shot out, pointing over the skipper's head. "You fool," Joe snarled, "can't you see she's going to pass to starboard!"

Down dropped his eyes to the compass, without another look at the other ship. I tell you, Joe could steer! He knew it, too. All three of us whirled around. Joe was right. The ship was close—too close for us to turn now, if we'd wanted to, but she was heading parallel to us; and while we stared, she rushed by, not a hundred feet between us, so close that you felt as though you could reach over and touch her. She was a big liner with a bunch of officers on her bridge, a couple of passengers in deck chairs, then rows and rows of portholes—and we were by. Joe never raised his head, but the wheel moved slightly as he ported a bit to keep the liner's wake from throwing us off our course.

The skipper was pale as a sheet. It was clear, mighty clear that we'd have been cut in half if Joe had obeyed orders. The Old Man stared at him, fascinated, and was about to speak when Joe drew a long breath and called to me.

"Take the wheel, I'm going below," he said. "And as for you," he turned to the skipper, "you can log me a month's pay if it makes you feel any better, but keep your hands and your tongue off me. I've had enough from you. When there's nothing that should be said you chatter like a parrot. When there is—I'm a farmer, but I saved your ship. My head may be dumb, but when the pinch comes I can use everything that's in it. And that's what makes a sailorman.

"Here," Joe turned back to me. "The course is west, and a half north."

And he walked out of the wheel-house and went below to pack his bag.

A Five-Part Story Part IV

by Hugh Pendexter

THE BORDER BREED

Author of "Pards," "The Homesteaders," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

I WAS born and raised in Tennessee. My earliest recollection is that of a comfortable log cabin at McBee's Ferry, on the Holston. My father, Jeffry Lang, I knew but little, for he was much away, engaged in trade in the Chickasaw country, and he died in my fifth year. Soon afterward we moved to Knoxville, founded three years before. This town held splendid associations for me—its massive blockhouse, the sturdy stockade, the unbelievable (at that time) splendor of the Governor's mansion. This was a fitting locale for the hair-raising recitals of the massacre at Cavet's Station in 1793.

Here I gained my first knowledge of the written word. Noah Webster's "Reader," the first book of its kind published on this side of the Atlantic, "Pilgrim's Progress," and De Foe's endlessly diverting "Robinson Crusoe" composed my meager but satisfying library.

The stirring tales told by the travelers back from the West early fired my quick imagination and roused my latent wanderlust. At my first opportunity I hired out as assistant to a carter traveling to North Carolina. My premier passage through the lofty Cumberlands was largely disappointing, for we met nothing more exciting than a few wandering Cherokees in search of wild-grapes. On my return from this trip I found that my mother had married Joel Snow, a rough but extremely fine type of frontiersman.

A close friendship grew up between my step-father and myself, and he taught me much about woodsmanship and marksmanship. Not long afterward my mother died, and Joel and I took to wandering toward the Mississippi, along whose mighty banks land was reputed to be exceptionally rich and fertile. It was Joel's idea to buy up land so that I might grow up to be a gentleman of leisure, as was befitting a youngster of my propensities and learning, the latter of which he, in his naïveté, stood greatly in awe of.

One day a strange morbidity clouded the usual geniality of my step-father. I wondered at the change in him—at the hunted look in his eye—but he refused to unburden himself because he wished to spare me all anxiety. He began to send me ahead on our journey "to scout a bit" and made me read every word of any paper he could lay his hands on.

At my importunate questioning Joel finally told me the cause of his uneasiness. He had once testified against The Dancer, one of a notorious band of border marauders known as Harpe's gang. The Dancer was said to have died in prison, but in reality he had escaped, and even now was stalking Joel for revenge. And since The Dancer never attacked except from behind and was one of the most treacherous of cutthroats, Joel feared him with cause enough.

So we began to travel stealthily by night, making our way toward Kentucky and the beautiful Ohio, where we knew The Dancer would not dare to follow, for there his reputation was too well known. Near Harrodsberg we fell in with Bully McGin and his impetuous daughter. McGin inveigled Joel to take part in Aaron Burr's wild scheme to seize Mexico from Spain—a plot promising untold wealth if successfully turned. I was left much in the company of "Princess" Polly McGin, who took a violent dislike to me from the first. On her dare we flat-boated to Shipping Port to try my marksmanship in a shooting contest, during which I unintentionally

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angered a drunken boatman, who promised to thrash me as soon as the contest was over.

BY DINT of excellent shooting and a capricious little trick on the part of Polly, I emerged victor of the contest and owner of a fat cow, which I immediately sold back to the promoter for twelve dollars. I still had the fight on my hands, for my superior marksmanship did not tend to soften the wrath of the drunken boatman. In the fight that ensued I soon realized that in the wrestling, bone-breaking style of fighting of the boatmen I should be much at a disadvantage, so I adopted the tactics that I learned from the carters—sidestepping and parrying solidly with the fists. The outcome was much in doubt until I was fortunate enough to land a terrific blow in the boatman's stomach. This suddenly dissipated his fight-lust for that day. Polly gloated over my double victory, and became almost amiable.

We decided to buy books with the proceeds of my prize.

At this time McGin and Joel were away for many days at a time on some secret mission. I was annoyed that Joel should not let me into his secret, and being sated of my endless petty disputes with Polly, became very restless. I decided to find work of some sort.

Greenberry Spiller, a garrulous old vagabond and one-time preacher whom Joel met on one of his trips, suggested that we apply for work at the salt-mine at Mann's Lick, and much to Polly's disgust I became a salt-worker. It was back-breaking work, yet it proved interesting to me, for I was put to devious tasks, so that no one of them became unbearably monotonous. At times, however, I was sorely tempted to quit, but I was borne up by the unctious garrulity of Greenberry, who talked much more than he worked. Again, I did not care to be thought a quitter by Joel and the McGins.

One day I was sent to Shepardsville to collect an account. Greenberry, since he could not obtain leave to accompany me, threw up his job and came anyway. As we made our way along a secluded road, we heard a whining voice calling for help from some roadside bushes. I advanced to give aid when a long arm shot out from the bushes and I barely missed the thrust of a gleaming knife. I fired from my knees, but my assailant, whom I recognized as Dancer by his hunched-up right shoulder, made his escape.

When I told Joel of this cowardly attack, he grew visibly older. Though a brave man in all other respects, he was utterly slave to his fear of Dancer. Hereupon, Greenberry decided our course of flight for us. His vivid word-pictures of the rich northern Ohio territory—the Promised Land, he termed it—would have enticed men far less gullible than ourselves. So we set out.

Breaking our way through almost impassable woodland, we found, instead of the flat lush meadows of Greenberry's stories, continuous wooded hills—woods so dense that the broiling noon-day sun penetrated but feebly through the thick forest roof. Finally Greenberry admitted that he had never been here before, but had been outrageously imposed upon by some lying scoundrel. We decided to make the best of a bad situation, and when, near the Vincennes post-road, we came upon a finely-equipped, but seemingly uninhabited cabin, we stopped to rest. A note left behind by Peters, the former occupant, made it clear that he had been scared away by the Indians. The next morning we found what the wolves had left of Peters' corpse. His skull had been crushed by an ax. Soon afterward three Indians called at the cabin and ordered us to move on, under penalty of death. One of them was Tecumseh, chief of the village on the Tippecanoe. We departed hurriedly, and our last view of the spot disclosed the cabin in flames.

It was at this time that Joel decided to stop running from Dancer—to become the hunter instead of the hunted. We pushed on till we reached the small Swiss settlement at Vevay. Here, in a brawl with some insolent river-men, we unwittingly gave aid to two Government agents in search of Bully McGin and his accomplice, Joel Snow. To elude them we left speedily for St. Louis. We stopped to warn McGin at his cabin, but he had already fled. We then took passage on a Virginia ark traveling down the Ohio. On one of the numerous broadhorn boats on the river I spied the two agents. I became very alarmed and continued the journey under extreme nervous tension.

WE CONTINUED our flight down the river, stopping only at the most inconspicuous places to replenish our food supplies. One morning I spied the two agents working a skiff inshore to make a landing. Strangely enough, Joel, who was unaware of the identity of the strangers, hailed them genially; and they returned the salutation in like spirit, being ignorant of the fact that Joel was one of the men they sought.

Twenty miles below Shawneetown we came to Cave-in Rock, reported to have been the scene of many a gruesome crime of the river pirates. As we examined the walls of the cave, Joel noticed this legend, scratched in the stone with some sharp instrument:

DANCER—16

The inscription appeared to be of very recent date.

We reembarked on the ark, more than ever determined to succeed in our double purpose: to elude the agents and to kill Dancer. Finally we reached Natchez, a cacaphonous, boozy, booming river town with a colorful hodge-podge of humanity. Traders and river men, fine ladies from the East, politicians, Indians and the usual flotsam and jetsam that clutter all flourishing river towns mingled in noisy heterogeneous crowds along the unpaved streets. No sooner had we landed than we became involved in a free-for-all brawl, in which I found myself fighting on the side of the boatman I had thrashed at the shooting contest. At the conclusion, victors and defeated guzzled whisky in mutual good-fellowship.

We had no definite clue as to The Dancer's whereabouts, but indications pointed north to the Choctaw and Chickasaw villages, where he could easily find a haven. Our subsequent route was toward Nashville, but before we reached this town Joel's old fear returned in increased intensity. A presentiment of Dancer's evil presence left him physically and mentally weak. As we entered the town limits we met a crowd of excited, gesticulating men. They were forming a posse to hunt down the scoundrel who had just murdered a fellow-townsman for the few shillings in his pockets. I asked whether any one was suspected. The answer was—Dancer.

News of other murders by Dancer reached our ears. It seemed that the wretch left a bloody trail wherever he went. One clue indicated that he was among the Creeks as guest of Red Eagle, or Weatherford, a powerful chieftain. But after a prolonged and futile search we lost all trace of Dancer. It was rumored that he had died.

Those were hectic days in the summer of 1811. Our relations with France and England were strained and none too amicable. Internally, the Indians were becoming troublesome. Mutual misunderstandings between the Government and the red men, petty and gross injustices perpetrated with immunity by white officials and a growing sense of uneasiness at the white man's encroachment on former Indian preserves combined to rouse the Indians to retaliation. And they were being organized by able leaders, head and shoulders above all of whom loomed the great Tecumseh.

About this time word came down the river that the McGins were back. It was true. McGin and Polly, both dressed in rich raiment, and both outwardly displaying an air of hauteur quite new to them, greeted us as amiably as of old. That McGin did not relish the grand manner was evident, but he wished to impress people with his importance in order that Polly might make a fine match. He opened up a pretentious house where Polly reigned like a little queen of the socially-elect of the town. It was rumored that McGin sought the candidacy for the State senatorship.

At a gathering at the McGin home enrolments were taken for a company to help General Harrison teach the insolent Tecumseh a lesson. McGin was to lead the volunteers. Joel and I enlisted immediately. However, I was doomed to see the company leave without me, for I broke my collarbone soon after leaving the gathering. When Joel and McGin left, I was left in the care of Polly, but I did not wish to be a burden nor in any way to interfere with her social activities, so I stayed at our old cabin, attended to by Greenberry in the infrequent intervals when he was sober. My shoulder healed, I set off with a youngster who had been thrown over by Polly, to join McGin and Joel.

I found the company and the rest of Harrison's army organized for battle. Soon afterward we were surprized by the Indians and, after a gory encounter, we repulsed them. I had been separated from Joel, and after the battle when I found him, I noticed that he carried McGin's sword. The brave McGin had died in the thick of the fight.

It was a sad young girl that received her father's sword and the story of his heroic death. Polly put herself under Joel's care, and he took over the task of straightening out McGin's affairs.

Then the trouble with the foreign powers came to a crisis. War was declared against England, and I decided to join Hull's army that was moving toward Detroit. Bidding a hasty good-by to Polly and Greenberry, I then took my leave of Joel, who had to remain behind because of Polly. He bade me god-speed with tears in his eyes.

SOME twenty young men of us, all eager for the promised fighting up north, overtook General William Hull's army at Frenchtown the day the army completed the bridge across the Huron some twenty-five miles from Detroit. Undoubtedly the British would have carried out their plans for attacking us in the swamps of the Huron if Colonel St. George had not been led to believe by a loyal American that we were to cross the Detroit River and attack Fort Malden near Amhertsburg on the Canadian side. The fear of a surprize attack caused us to sleep on our arms that night.

The end of the next day found the army beyond the rivers Aux Ecorces and Rouge and encamped at Spring Wells at the lower end of the Detroit settlement and opposite Sandwich across the river. The British were throwing up fortifications opposite our position. The sight of them aroused our martial ardor, and the army was keen-set to cross and attack at once. Especially insistent on this course were the Ohio volunteers who were almost mutinous in their impatience. These levies were new to war and unused to discipline and must have been an annoyance to their officers and our commander at times. It was with the greatest difficulty they were held from attempting a crossing and carrying the fight into Canada.

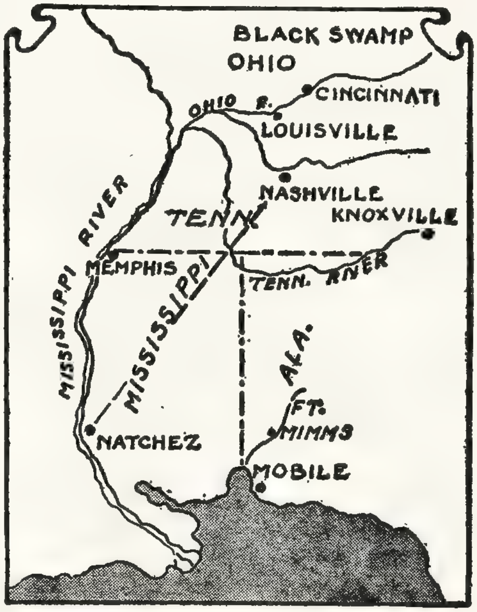
General Hull called a council and was firm in refusing to cross the river until he had heard from Washington. Our Fort Detroit, built by the English after taking over Canada, stood on a hill some two hundred and fifty yards back from the river and contained a garrison of ninety-odd men. The town, composed of one hundred and sixty houses and having a population of eight hundred, was surrounded by a stockade fourteen feet high. Unfortunately the fort did not command the river. The armed vessels of the enemy could come and go as they would, so far as the fort was concerned. On the other hand, the fortifications across the river, when completed, would menace both town and fort. It was imperative that the enemy's works should be destroyed. The general insisted he had no authority to invade Canada. The rank and file could not understand why, when at war with a country, we should not attack when and where we could do the most damage.

The officers were greatly chagrined by his refusal and some of the troops were openly mutinous. Fortunately the general that very night received a letter from Mr. Eustis, Secretary of War, directing him to "commence operations immediately" and to capture Fort Malden and other works, did his force and the circumstances justify the endeavor. The general at once set about his preparations for transferring his army of some two thousand men across the river. But search the shores as closely as we could, we found only enough small boats and canoes to take over four hundred men at a time. This was too small a force to send against an enemy behind breastworks. General Hull proceeded to use strategy. All the boats were taken down to Spring Wells and Colonel McArthur's regiment marched to the same point. All this was observed by the enemy, who assumed we were preparing to cross and attack Fort Malden.

That night troops and boats ascended the river to Bloody Bridge, where in daylight one could see the bullet-scars in the huge whitewood trees, made during Pontiac's siege of the town. Early in the morning of July twelfth we crossed just below Hog Island. This was the Sabbath and the day was most gracious. There was no enemy to oppose us. The flag was unfurled. The army cheered. The people on Bloody Bridge and in Fort Detroit cheered. Those French Canadians living along the shore greeted us most amiably. We camped on Colonel Francis Babie's farm, his unfinished two-story brick house serving as headquarters. General Hull's first act was to issue a proclamation warning the inhabitants that no quarter would be shown any man caught fighting beside a savage. This threat had a good effect, and a considerable number of Canadian militia returned to their farms and a few joined our forces.

We had won an important objective by strategy. We were immensely pleased with ourselves, but we were none the less thirsting for a fight. The men, especially the raw recruits, would not be satisfied until they had been blooded. The enemy was known to be eighteen miles below us, at the little village of Amhertsburg, where Elliot, McKee and Simon Girty had had homes and headquarters during Wayne's campaign. There was scarcely a man in the army who did not associate the name of the hamlet with the deepest loathing and unquenchable hatred. The army was vastly pleased on the morning of the thirteenth when the general sent a reconnoitering party toward the village.

Colonel Cass led two hundred and eighty of us who were used to border warfare, and we found no opposition or ambushes until within four miles of Fort Malden and at the bridge over Riviere Aux Canards. This was a broad, deep stream flowing sluggishly through wide marshes. Our attack on the enemy at the south end of the bridge was so fierce that they fled at our first fire. These men, of the Forty-first Canadian militia, were supported by Indians under Tecumseh. The enemy was reinforced and attempted to drive us into the river. Three times they rallied, and then fled in earnest and were pursued for half a mile, with our drums beating Yankee Doodle.



Then followed one of the most fatal mistakes of the campaign for it was an error which paved the way for the great disaster. On the morning of the seventeenth we received reinforcements, Fourth U. S. Regiment men, and a piece of artillery under Captain Eastman. Colonel Cass and Captain Snelling, in a council of officers, insisted that the bridge be held, as the army must pass over it in attacking Fort Malden, or else make a wide detour and wade through the water and mire of the extensive marshes, with the savages ready to attack them. A majority of the officers insisted it was not for a reconnoitering party to hold the bridge, and insisted on withdrawing. A courier was sent to General Hull, who refused to permit a force to remain. He argued that the bridge was too near the enemy to be held by such a small force, and, lacking cannon from Detroit, he could not advance against Fort Malden.

This decision caused much irritation among officers and men, especially the abandoning of the campaign against Malden. The affair at the bridge was the first battle, and we had won it. We believed it to be of the utmost importance that the Detroit River be cleared of all enemy fortifications. Now that the war is behind us, we know we could easily have captured the fort, as it was weak and poorly garrisoned, with Indians and militia daily deserting. Had we pushed on and taken Malden, doubtless the disgrace of Detroit would have been avoided. Hull has been savagely condemned for what was to follow, and a court martial has found him guilty of cowardice, neglect of duty and conduct unbecoming an officer. As to the failure to advance on Malden we can only say he had no reliable information as to the strength of the place.

But this is not a history of the war, nor of Hull's terrible error in surrendering Detroit. I was one of those who lived through the shame of that Sabbath afternoon of September sixth, when we were held outside Montreal until the streets could be decorated as for a fête. And the shame of being paraded through the streets which were brightly illuminated after dark. Those of the volunteers and militia were sent home on parole. But Hull and the regulars were taken to Canada to grace a triumphal procession. I would have been spared the Canadian experience if not for Tecumseh. I was an onlooker among the prisoners when General Brock removed his crimson sash and tied it around Tecumseh's waist. The great leader's gaze happened to rest on me and he made some remark and pointed me out. Forthwith I was herded with the regulars.

It is impossible to picture the delight of all Canada, and the mortification, shame and anger in the States, when we gave up a strong post, a brave army, a wonderful stretch of territory without striking a blow in self-defense, without waiting a moment for the strong reinforcements of men and ample war stores then being rushed to us. The surrender of Detroit sent the savage tribes to the enemy, delayed the raising of another invading army and greatly prolonged the war. As new generations come to sit in judgment the verdict against Hull may be shorn of some of its harshness, at least to this extent: he was too prudent, too cautious, too old; his physical vigor was sapped and his judgment was impaired by the arduous trip from Dayton to Detroit. He was entirely the wrong man for the great trust. He was not a traitor. He was not wicked. He was weak. The court martial recommended him to the mercy of the President because of his age and his Revolutionary war services. The President pardoned him. His errors of judgment were terrible. Given a Bully McGin to lead his army and we would have marched through Montreal, not as prisoners of war, but as conquerors of the city.

SHAME and chagrin, viciously abetted by homesickness, undid my health. That long winter of waiting, waiting, was nearly the death of me. I was exchanged in the spring of 1813 and at last found myself back on the Kentucky shore. Polly McGin stood by Joel's side, her hand on his shoulder, and I was so affected by the haggard lines in his face that it was some moments before I could spare a glance for the girl, and a much longer time before I could realize her extraordinary beauty. She always had been beautiful, but now there was something about her that set men's hearts to thumping in a most disquieting manner. But I saw in her only a beautiful picture, an adornment to my home coming. Of my many messages they had received only the first, that sent by a Kentucky man returning on parole. So the two of them had believed me to be dead, and I looked a specter when I confronted them. Joel threw an arm around my shoulders and squeezed me tightly. The girl suddenly burst into foolish weeping and ran to her room.

I remained at the McGin house a week, daily lectured by Greenberry Spiller on the folly of ever leaving a land of milk and honey, and waited on by Polly and Margy. But there were so many visitors, drawn there by the girl, and I was so often being asked to relate my experiences, I secured my old lodgings and retired to them. I recovered my health. I was hungry to be at work. I had no war experiences I cared to revive. When hard-pressed for a history of my part in the conflict, I could only turn my head aside and confess—

"I was with Hull at Detroit."

So I lived on at my old lodgings, although Joel stayed at the big house when he was not on the river. From Margy and Greenberry, and later from tavern talk, I learned Polly was the toast of the town and that the fame of her beauty had spread through the State. It was also said she would bring great wealth as well as beauty to the man she married. That she was pursued by gallants, young and old, beginners in love and men of high position, any one of whom would have mortgaged his soul to take her without a penny, was perfectly plain after I had seen the procession coming to and leaving the house.

Joel was her watch-dog. He relied implicitly on her good sense and always contented himself with reminding—

"If any of them pester you, just tell me."

Sometimes she whispered in his ear; sometimes he did not wait to be told. He would speak briefly with a man, and that admirer would discontinue his visits to the big house.

After idling about the town for a brief spell, with my discontent increasing daily, I went to Mann's Lick at the request of Abel Annis, my old employer, to act as his overseer. His business had increased so rapidly he needed all his time on his books. Then life became routine, enjoyable enough if strangers had not persisted in asking about my war history. I spent each Sabbath in Louisville, and always found the big house cluttered with beaux. Polly was the essence of delight and wildly gay at times. In one of these tantalizing spells she called me "Old Sour Face," and asked why I did not come to the house more often.

I frankly replied:

"I'm the only man on earth who has seen you and isn't in love with you. While it's good for you, Polly, to see me two or three times a month, it's something of a nuisance for me to always find the place overrun with love-sick boys and men."

While we had spoken in jest she became grave immediately and gave me her hand and stared steadily at me as she replied:

"Jeffry, you're honest. You haven't the nimblest wit in the world; but you are honest. All the others think they're honest while being simply selfish. And it does do me good to talk with you. Hereafter the Sabbath is your day and you'll find me alone."

Her seriousness disturbed me and I attempted to dissuade her; for her resolve could be prompted only by her kindly heart. She grieved as sadly as ever over the death of her father, and the distraction she found in her friends and admirers was good for her. Nor was "Sour Face" an unfitting term to apply to me. The Hull campaign still rankled bitterly, and every time I thought of the Montreal days I could feel my self-respect tottering. While some of her admirers were older than I, yet I always had a feeling I was quite an ancient man. From early youth I had associated with older men, and Joel had always treated me as his equal in years. But despite my insistence she stoutly declared it should be as she said and for the ample reason she preferred it that way.

So it happened that the Sabbath found me at the big house with seldom another there. These hours together taught me Polly was less quick to quarrel, although we often disagreed. I enjoyed the visits immensely and Joel, quick to discover the new order of things, arranged his piloting so that he had that day with us. With these two best friends for companions I should have been contented, but, instead, was troubled to find myself disturbed by a strange unrest. Finally I decided my conscience was upbraiding me for remaining away from the fighting. I had done nothing in the war except to get myself captured and exchanged on a year's parole. Volunteers were leaving the valley almost continuously. Usually Polly's suitors, as rapidly as they learned their quest was hopeless, enlisted.

Overseas, Napoleon's Russian campaign had cost more than four hundred thousand men. The Moscow disaster, and the retreat which was almost an extermination, brought dismay to many of us. Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Spain and Prussia coalesced to do away with the Corsican for all time. This situation permitted Great Britain to concentrate her efforts on the American war. Napoleon's great victory at Lützen at a time when he was supposed to be broken, and when his army consisted of raw conscripts, was learned with much enthusiasm in the States.

While I had been eating my heart out

in Canada, Andrew Jackson had taken the Tennessee militia to Natchez by water. About the time of my exchange he had been ordered to dismiss his army and turn over all public property to General Wilkinson at New Orleans. It was characteristic of Jackson to refuse to disband his little army more than five hundred miles from home. And it was his cheerfulness in undergoing hardships during the homeward march afoot over the Natchez Trace that won for him his name of Old Hickory. The Hull catastrophe had embittered me against more northern exploits and incapable leaders, even if not deterred by my parole. The South Country always appealed to me, and from Kentucky to New Orleans we were convinced that the Upper Creek towns under Weatherford were up to mischief. We knew it was but a question of a few weeks before Old Hickory would be taking the field again, and this time for business.

I talked the matter over with Joel and his fine face reflected his sad mood as he paced the floor while he listened. Yet he was quick to say:

"You must go, Jeffy, if you feel that way. Others are going. You're in good health again. We'd go together if not for Polly. She has no idea of how things are, and I'm making a fight every day to keep the truth from her. At least, until she is happily married, she mustn't guess. For all time if possible. We're partners in that trade, Jeffy."

"The best partnership we ever formed, Joel."

"I knew you felt that way. She's the third great happiness to come into my life. Your dear mother was the first; you the second. Now it's Polly. I don't understand why I should have such blessings, never doing anything to deserve 'em—But you let your matter wait a few days and cross with me to Jeffersonville to-night. I'm expecting to meet one of Harrison's quartermasters there. He's due to arrive from down the river and I must be on hand as he'll be in a hurry to keep on to Cincinnati and the Sandusky, where old Tecumseh and Proctor are planning mischief."

"Of course I'll cross with you. But we'd best cross before dark as it looks like a storm."

It was dark, with a storm howling up the river, when we landed on the high bank and entered the tidy little settlement of thirty houses. The wind was increasing to a gale as we hurried to the tavern. As we were blown along Joel cried—

"Some of Polly's sweethearts are in for a ducking."

She was giving a party that night and had professed disappointment at Joel's and my absence.

The quarter-master was not at the tavern, and as there was no chance of his arriving that night, I suggested we turn back at once while we could make the crossing in the little skiff.

Joel refused, saying:

"Polly's having a good time. Margy and Greenberry will look after things. We're snug here and we might as well wait till morning, or later. Our man's bound to come along soon. I was told to expect him tonight. Most likely he's held up just a few miles below the Falls."

We were the only guests, and after an excellent supper we sat in the barroom with the landlord peacefully sleeping in his easy chair. Joel was in a reminiscent mood. He began to talk of my boyhood. He recalled my delight when he brought me my first rifle. His loving memory had retained trifles of my youth I had forgotten. It did seem he had remembered everything and always had had me under his eye. And as I sat there and listened, I wondered if any other young fellow ever had such a staunch friend. I can see him now, contentedly puffing his pipe; and I can hear him telling me:

"Such a wonderful lot of good fortune I've had, Jeffy. Finding three people to love! And such a likely younker you always was! When you was knee-high to a grasshopper I began telling you never to be afraid of anything that walked on legs. Lordy! how troubled your little mother was at first when you began fighting. She was frontier-bred and knew our life was always a fight against something; but it come hard for her to realize that you, like all other younkers, must stand up to the lick-log at times."

I crossed to the fireplace to light my pipe. When I turned about I was transfixed with horror by the sight of a long angular face pressed against the window pane close to Joel's chair. In the space of a second I saw the face and noticed how the head was canted over on the right shoulder. Then I was screaming and hurling my pipe at the window. And as I did so there was a dull explosion and Joel turned half around; then settled back placidly and the smoking muzzle of the flint-lock pistol was jerked from the hole in the glass.

The landlord awoke with a start and stared foolishly around the room. I was at Joel's side, telling him Dancer was outside, that I was off to find him. He did not answer, or look up. I placed a hand on his shoulder and he slumped sidewise and would have fallen had I not caught him. Not until then did I know he had been hit, the bullet penetrating the left side. Not until then did the terrible, unthinkable realization come to me that my friend was dead.

I do not remember leaving him, of leaving the tavern. When I came to my senses I was on the river bank, trying to untie the rope of a skiff. Lights were moving behind me as men with lanterns stumbled about among the houses. Some one was shaking me by the shoulder and insisting I should come back. It was the landlord. As we returned to the tavern, now lively enough, the landlor puffed and wheezed exclamation after exclamation of horror.

I spoke no word until we entered the barroom, where a dozen citizens and several frightened women were gathered. My voice sounded strange as I gave directions for a stout craft to be procured so that my old friend and I could make the crossing to the Kentucky shore together for the last time.

Joel was as well known and liked in Jeffersonville as across the river. And the men were quick to serve. It was within an hour of midnight when we landed; and despite the wind and rain, a crowd of rivermen quickly gathered, once a boatman began shouting:

"Joel Snow's been done for! Joel Snow's been shot dead!"

They were rough, careless fellows, but they all knew a man when they saw him. And they loved my friend. I stilled their horrible cries for vengeance by giving the facts of the murder and a description of Dancer. When I finished a man cried:

"I must a seen him! Come ahead of you. Had a long cloak that flapped and flapped in the wind and made me think of a giant crow. He passed close to me, and —— him! He was laughing. He went up through the town."

Nearly all the men started searching blindly. I requested that thirty minutes after I departed they take the body to the side door of the McGin house. I took to the middle of the street and ran. The house was brilliantly lighted and above the howling of the wind I heard the music as I made for the side entrance. Margy was giving orders in the kitchen when I entered. Greenberry Spiller was smoking his pipe in a corner. One glimpse at my face and she was wailing—

"Oh, what great sorrow now?"

"Fetch Polly here. Greenberry, get my horse. Ride to my lodgings. Fetch my rifle and hunting clothes. And ride fast!"

The old man could be active enough when he realized a situation demanded celerity. He was out the door, bareheaded, and making for the stables by the time the frightened woman gained the long hall.

Then Polly floated in, so much fairy loveliness. In a numb sort of a way I had dreaded this scene. I had given no thought to how I should tell it. Like listening to another I heard myself saying—

"Your father was a soldier and a brave man."

"Joel's dead?" she whispered, her hands clutching at the lace at throat and bosom and tearing it away.

I bowed my head.

"They'll be bringing him soon. Murdered! I ride at once after the murderer—Dancer. Clear the house."

She was gone, and as I waited for my horse I heard her clear voice crying:

"You must all go away! My dearest friend is dead. Don't talk to me. Go!"

Then she was back in the kitchen, panting for breath, her mouth a straight line—

"He was foully killed, you say?"

I nodded. I was wondering if the horse would never come.

"You know the murderer? Do you know which way he went?" she asked.

"He crossed to this side instead of going up or down the river. That shows he is striking south through Tennessee—I'll get him!"

I heard my horse and jumped to the door. Then I remembered and paused to explain:

"I can't wait to bury Joel. You must do that, Polly. He will be fetched here any minute now. The trail is hot. I must not lose it. I will hunt that beast till I find him or die. Once I find him, as sure as the sun rises I will fetch him back to Kentucky and hang him with my own hands."

"Get to your horse!" she cried. Then she added—

"God give you good hunting!"

CHAPTER X

THE PITY OF IT

THROUGH Kentucky and to within a dozen miles of Nashville the trail was so hot I hourly expected to come up with Dancer. It was night when I completed the last mile into Nashville and set about seeking traces of him. In riding through Kentucky he had stolen two horses, and a dozen miles out of Nashville I had met a man who had seen the murderer and had noticed that his mount was lame.

On reaching the town I rode to the City Hotel and told the loungers in the barroom of Joel's death. His friends in the town were many, and as word spread I was soon surrounded by an angry crowd.

"His horse is played out. He will buy, or steal one here. Probably has by this time. Talk with horse-dealers. Let some one search for traces south of the town."

I had eaten nothing for twelve hours and while men scattered to find some signs of the murderer I hurriedly ate my supper. The result of all our efforts was nothing. No one could be found who had seen Dancer in or near the town. He had bought no horse. No one reported a horse to be stolen. Arranging for a fresh mount I announced I would sleep for a few hours and then ride down the Natchez Trace. Toward morning I was aroused by the landlord, who said a man was below who had just arrived over the Knoxville road.

"Within a few miles of town he found a horse lying close to the road. Animal's throat was cut. May mean something. May not."

I had not undressed, and by the time he had finished I was making downstairs. The stranger repeated what the landlord had told. The brutality of it strongly suggested Dancer. While I was hurriedly eating breakfast and a boy was holding my horse at the door, several citizens bustled in with a roughly-clad man. He was a hog-raiser and lived a few miles out on the Knoxville road. He had come in to report the theft of two horses from his log-stable. The dead horse and the stolen horses convinced me Dancer was on the Knoxville road. Gaining the street I mounted and rode madly into the Knoxville road and soon distanced the small band of citizens bent on accompanying me. It was plain now that Dancer had left the Kentucky-Nashville road and had cut across to the road to the east. He had slaughtered his worn out mount and had provided himself with two fresh animals.

I met two bands of travelers and questioned each. None of these had seen a man riding a horse and leading another. While I knew he would withdraw oneside on discovering men approaching it did seem as if some one must glimpse him. Even if he were successful in dodging all travelers there remained his problem of food. So I took to leaving the road to investigate each smoke and to inquire if a stranger had sought food there. Not until the night of that first day did I find a clue. The owner of a cabin a quarter of a mile back from the road complained of the theft of a ham and a jug of corn-whisky from his smoke house. From then on as I worked east my hopes were rekindled each time I feared I had passed him by learning of a raided smokehouse or hen-yard.

My search was thorough and of necessity slow. I was moving only a third as fast as when crossing Kentucky. I drew a blank day and was discouraged. He had withdrawn from the road to plunge south into the Indian country. I halted at the little settlement of Cairo and endeavored to make up my mind whether I should proceed farther, or strike blindly to the south. Dancer would not return to Nashville or Kentucky. He had found refuge in the Upper Creek towns before and doubtless was making for the villages on the Coosa and the Talapoosa now. Yet there was a chance he would keep on to Knoxville before striking south. News of his crime could not be ahead of him. Because of this possibility, even if a slim one, I decided to proceed as far as Fort Blount, and, if I learned nothing there, to turn south. My plans were changed as I was eating some corn bread and allowing my horse to rest. A hunter came up to the doorway and asked my host if he knew of any one who had lost a horse. My host replied he knew of no missing horses. Then the hunter remarked:

"Mighty queer. Two days ago I come upon the carcass of a horse down on

Cany's Fork. Legs all right. Throat cut. Queer place and a queer way for a man to kill a horse."

I startled the fellow by leaping to my feet and excitedly crying:

"Lead me to that spot! I'll pay you five dollars!"

Once he decided I was in earnest the hunter enthusiastically agreed—

"For that much money I'll lead you down to Weatherford's red towns."

My host stared at me curiously and re-remarked—

"Stranger, you pay high for looking at a dead horse."

"My name is Jeffry Lang. The man who killed that horse murdered my step-father and best friend, Joel Snow."

"Good—!" yelped the hunter. "Joe Snow killed? What are we coming to! How? When? Where?"

As briefly as possibly I told of the murder. "Come!" cried the hunter. "I'll serve you without pay. Joe Snow was my friend in the old days."

It required two days for us to cover some forty miles in reaching the dead horse on Cany's Fork. The hunter, afoot, could make better time over the narrow and twisting path than I could mounted. The scavengers had left but little of the carcass; but there was enough to show the throat had been cut. A closer examination revealed something the hunter had not noticed; a bullet through the head. If I had had any doubt as to the identity of the slayer this second discovery eliminated it. Who but Dancer could shoot his faithful mount dead, and then slash the poor throat to satisfy his bestial lust for blood?

We cast about for other signs, but found none for a time. Had the fugitive allowed his wornout horse to wander, there would have been no fixing of his presence on the fork. The hunter, who had started traveling in a wide circle, now returned and reported:

"Signs of a horse a mile down where that —— crossed to t'other side—Now, I've done about all I can. If not for my fambly I'd keep on with you. If you say the word I'll trot along as it is."

"No. Go home. You've done me a great service. My man is traveling south. Here is your money."

"Not a penny for helping a bit to track the man who done for Joel Snow. No talk about it." And with a jerk of his head for a farewell he hurried down the fork on his long walk to the Cumberland.

I examined my rifle and crossed to the east bank and found a path that avoided the many turns and bends of the stream and led me through a rough and broken country. By this time I had formed a vague idea of Dancer's plans. He would first strike for the old Chickamauga towns on the Tennessee below Chattanooga—a rendezvous for red banditti and white Tories until destroyed in 1794, just as the Chattanooga towns under Dragging Canoe were destroyed by Sévier and Campbell in 1782. He had not dared to take the old Nickajack road from Nashville from fear of being overtaken. His flight to the east was to blind us, and he might have succeeded if not for his terrible mania to kill. Joel and I had been to Nickajack and the four adjoining towns by the way of the Nashville road, and once by way of the Great Warrior's Path from the heads of the Holston. But I never had taken this round about course before.

Leaving Cany's Fork, I struck for Sequatchy Creek, which enters the Tennessee between Crowtown and Nickajack. Before I reached this stream, my attention was attracted by buzzards gathering from all directions and taking to earth a half a mile ahead. This was a familiar sight to one traveling the wilds, as the scavengers are quick to detect food. It became suggestive as I remembered my recent discovery on the fork. Pushing forward rapidly, I soon came upon the repulsive company. The buzzards flew heavily for a short distance and roosted in trees and stared down at me. Before me was the skeleton of a horse. It was picked nearly clean, and without attempting any examination I passed on, satisfied it was Dancer's mount. My own horse was almost played out and I advanced on foot, hopeful of coming up with the murderer.

It was night when I reached the Sequatchy and made a dark camp. I picketed my horse and scouted down stream in search of a fire. Discovering nothing, I returned and slept in short naps until the first light permitted me to look for signs. Near my camp I found the print of a moccasin at the edge of the stream, but I could not know if it were left by Dancer or an Indian.

Finally I reached the sites of the Cherokee towns which had made river travel so hazardous for our boatmen in the old days. I saw no man until near Nickajack when I came face to face with a Cherokee man who walked with a limp.

THE Nation now was amiably disposed to the Seventeen Fires and was against the war notions of the Upper Creek towns under the half-breed, Weatherford. I halted to talk with him and seated myself and filled my pipe and passed it; as there would be snatching of information as is customary among white men. After we had smoked he informed me that McIntosh, chief of the Lower Creek towns and friendly to the States, was even then in the Cherokee country, seeking an allegiance to put a stop to Weatherford's martial ambitions. McIntosh had relatives among the Cherokees, but my gossip did not think the Nation would interfere with the affairs of another Nation. But he was positive that Weatherford would receive no aid from the Cherokees, and that many of the latter, acting independently, would enlist to fight under McIntosh.

Now I ventured to bring up the subject I was most interested in. I casually remarked:

"Some white man comes down here to open a bag of bad talk. He has one shoulder high and carries his head like this. And I hunched my shoulder and tilted my head to one side.

The Cherokee shrugged his shoulders as an expression of contempt and replied:

"*Suli*—buzzard—went along this way three sleeps ago. He is bad flesh. There is no mat for him among the Tsalagi."

I came to my feet with scant respect for red etiquette and mounted my horse.

"I ride to kill a buzzard," I explained.

He pointed down stream, and gravely called after me:

"May some powerful shaman send the winds to help you in your hunting. May the red *selagwutsi*—reed-arrow—strike him in the center of his soul. *Yu!*"

My hopes were high as I traveled down the river path. Thus far, all the way from the north bank of the Ohio, I had trailed my man. Although I was three days behind him, I believed I could overtake him before he reached the Creek towns provided he believed himself safe from pursuit. If need be, I would follow him into the Creek towns and kill him even if his red friends butchered me the next moment. But my great desire was to take him alive and keep my vow to take him back to Kentucky and hang him. As I rode on I began to realize that the nature of the country presented many difficulties to my quest. I was in a quandary as to the route he had taken. The country was threaded with ancient paths. Which of these was he following? Or he might secure a canoe at one of the five deserted towns I was passing through and float down the Tennessee as far as the Elk, where he could turn due south and reach Mobile, and from that menaced port reach a British ship, or move on to New Orleans, or enter Florida. He might leave the Tennessee when north of the Coosa. The latter would be his natural line of flight unless he had small stomach for fighting, and disliked the idea of risking his vile hide in payment for the refuge so long furnished him by the hostile Creeks.

As it was all guess work, I decided to follow the river as far as Muscle Shoals, when I should shift my course to the Tombigbee and follow that stream south to Mobile if necessary. If the settlements on the Tombigbee had no information for me I should turn back up the Alabama and seek him along the Coosa. The death of Joel had so terribly upset me that I was asking but one thing of life—to find Dancer. What happened after he was disposed of did not impress me as being very material.

A day's journey below Running Water I swapped my horse for a dugout and used the canoe until due south of Huntsville, when I landed to talk with several Indian women and two men. These were Creeks and as they were traveling east I suspected them to be on their way to the Coosa towns. The men were sullen. I offered them tobacco. They snatched it from me, but they would not smoke with me. Then I directly stated:

"I am looking for a white man. I am traveling fast to overtake him. He will be glad to see me. His head twists to one side." And I leaned my head to the right.

By the quick exchange of glances I was convinced they had seen my man. I took out a new knife and played with it and said—

"I trade a knife to find my friend."

The two men whispered together. The women became blank of face. Then one of the men reached out his hand for the knife and said:

"The man with the twisted neck goes down that way to the Black Warrior river. A man with hair on his face is with him."

"A red man or a white man?"

"He is white."

"How far ahead?"

He held up two fingers and again reached for the knife. I gave it to him, and also traded the canoe for some dried strips of meat as tough as bark. My course now for more than fifty miles was a trifle east of south, and about ten miles west of, and parallel to, the route General Jackson was soon to take. I traveled hard and fast. Either Dancer had fallen in with another victim and I would be seeing buzzards to lead me to him, or he had met with one of his own murderous kind, and I would have two to deal with. The odds counted nothing against my great desire. I took the Indian paths when they suited my convenience. At times I had no trace and fought my way through brush tangles and waded through patches of swamp. I begrudged the time necessary to perch a turkey and shoot meat. I counted the time lost I spent in half-cooking and hastily eating a meal. I passed the mountains and at last found myself on the river.

Continuing southeast, I would come to the Creek towns. Now that I paused and weighed my last information, I began to doubt. If Dancer and his companion had left the Tennessee for the Creek towns, they had done so at a point below where I had met the Indians. It would have been more logical for them to have followed up the Tennessee, and this would mean Dancer had doubled back. Then came the old suspicion he had taken the Mobile route and would not enter the Creek Nation except from Florida. To thrust my head into Weatherford's trap without being assured my man was there was both foolish and reckless. I decided to be very cautious. If among the Creeks, Dancer would not leave them. I worked down the river a mile and came upon several women gathering berries. They would have scuttled away if I had not caught a young girl and held her. In their own tongue I told them I was a friend and was seeking a friend. If they would answer my questions I would pass on. Then I asked them if Dancer was in any of the villages.

One of the older women shook her head and said—

"They say he went away before the Moon of Strawberries."

"Some of your people told me three sleeps ago he came down to this river. They say a man with hair on his face walked with him."

"A hunter of our people talked with two men far down this river," said one of the women. "He said one man had hair on his face."

I released the girl and gave her a shilling, and the entire party took to cover like partridges and I saw no more of them. I followed down the river for the rest of the day before I succeeded in finding a dugout canoe, which I appropriated. When I found clean water and kneeled to drink, I noticed my face was thin and creased like an old man's; but this was due to my consuming hate, and not to hardships.

After that I lost track of the days and only knew I was being baked by the August sun, eaten alive by insects and living on half-rations. But I hoped I was making as good time as was Dancer. I entered and floated down the Tombigee and met a white hunter who gave me fresh strength by saying two men in a dugout had passed his camp two days back. He had hailed them and one waved a greeting but they did not land. Asked to describe them, he could only say one had a white beard. The other was reclining as if asleep. I paddled fast and I paddled late, but did not catch up with them.

When I finally came to Fort Stephens, I was glad to quit the river and take to the Old Road which led almost due south to Hollinger's Ferry. Before leaving the little settlement I called at the old Spanish blockhouse and found it had just been garrisoned by Captain Scott and his company. I talked with some of the men and described Dancer. One replied for all when he said:

"Folks are pouring in day and night. Every one between the Alabama and the Tombigbee are trying to find a stout place to fort themselves. Your man probably passed down the road."

I took to the road and found it to be a vast improvement on being cramped in a dugout, or wallowing through swamps and forcing my way through thickets. It was some twenty-five miles to Hollinger's and I proposed to finish it at one stretch. As I swung along I met families flying north, Caller's defeat at Burnt Corn Creek causing many to believe there was no safety even near Mobile. Others came after me, fleeing south from up the river. Several families from Old Wakefield were crossing the river to Curry's Fort. Others on that side of the river were hastening to my side. The fear of the Creeks was tense and general, and the bulk of the people seemed to believe that, wherever they might be situated, that was the place to get away from.

WHEN my road skirted McIntosh Bluff I paused to rest and relax from my man-hunting mood, and a great tenderness for Joel and Bully McGin surged through my soul. Less than three miles from where I halted Aaron Burr was arrested, and it was knowledge of this fact that gave pause to my savagery and turned my thoughts toward those two brave men who had died by violence.

But the old bitterness quickly returned and I resumed my empty task of asking all I met if they had seen a man with one shoulder carried high and his head tilted to one side. I also mentioned his traveling companion, the man with the white beard. Several professed to having seen the latter but none recalled seeing Dancer. I decided old men with white beards were not uncommon and I began to doubt if I was not, despite my great efforts, following a false trail. The Indians who had given me my information were hostile to me and my country. Why should they tell me the truth? The women on the Black Warrior were more honest, I believed. It was the recollection of their talk rather than anything that the Indians on the Tennessee had said, that kept me to my task.

Reaching Hollinger's Ferry, I took the cut-off to the Alabama and crossed at Mimms' Ferry. Many families were pouring in through the cut-off to make Mimms' Fort. I went along with them on the chance I might learn some news of Dancer. There was quite a company of us along that two miles to the fort, which was located on a slight eminence a short distance from the boat-yard on Lake Tensaw. During the walk I talked with men who had been out on scout-duty, and from them learned that for some days influential and well-to-do mixed-blood Indian families had been coming down the Alabama in boats and canoes to hide in the swamps about the lake. This wholesale flight evidenced a strong distrust of Weatherford and his warriors. Many white refugees also had swarmed down the river. My companions added that it was the efforts of these newcomers that had erected a stout stockade around the house and grounds of old Samuel Mimms, a pioneer in that locality and a man of considerable property.

When we came up to the eastern gate I halted to look about. There was too much cover for lurking savages near the gate. I saw no men out beating the bush. A sentinel was sleepily leaning against the pickets on one side of the open gate and children were playing outside. Looking through the gateway I could see the Mimms house situated nearly in the middle of the inclosure. I estimated the space inside the stockade to be an acre. There were four houses in a line back of the Mimms place and north of it. South of it were two houses. There was a small inclosure on the west side with two gates. Rather, one gate was in place but the other had not been erected. In this space, and on the south side, was a guardhouse. On the north and south sides the stockade was built out around a house. A soldier informed me that the one on the north was Patrick's loom-house but was called "the bastion." Just inside the stockade and south of it was a line of tents, with John Randon's house standing in the corner. North of the gate there were two houses close to the pickets and there were loopholes at a height of three and a half feet —too many of them, I believed.

I spoke with the sentinel and learned that General F. L. Claiborne, an ensign with Wayne at Fallen Timbers at the age of twenty, and now in command of the Mississippi Militia, was at Mt. Vernon, a dozen miles distant, and was doing all he could to secure the safety of that section of the country. Not only had he erected several rude defenses between the Tombigbee and the Alabama, but he also had inspected Fort Mimms and had insisted on two blockhouses being added to the stockade. He was now returned to Fort Stoddart on the Mobile, a few miles east of Mt. Vernon, and was renewing his petitions to General Thomas Flournoy, commander of the Seventh Military District, to be allowed to march his forces into the heart of the Creek country. Flournoy, convinced by Indian Agent Hawkins that the Indians were friendly, replied that Governor Holmes, of Mississippi, could send his militia among the Creek towns on his own responsiblity, but that the United States Army and its officers could have nothing to do with such an invasion. This refusal tied Claiborne's hands, and he was limited to distributing his forces among the several stockades and crude forts to act purely on the defensive.

Then I told the sentinel I was looking for a man; and I described Dancer.

"No such man here unless he come in when I wa'n't on duty and has kept inside since coming. You've come for the fighting?"

"If there's any fighting I'll help. Have you noticed a man with a white beard?"

"The Indians won't bring any fight down here. There's a dozen of men with white whiskers. You go to the loom-house on the right and sign under Dixon Bailey. He proved his grit at Burnt Corn Creek. He's captain of the volunteers now. You'll make the third new man since yesterday morning. He's got more'n seventy now."

"Two others just ahead of me?"

"Old man and youngster."

Dancer had no beard and he was no longer young. Yet I repeated my imitation of his raised shoulder and twisted head. "One like this?"

"I've told you once no such critter's here. Both carried their heads on top of their necks," shortly replied the sentinel.

Convinced that I had lost the trail I berated myself for not making greater exertions after finding the dead horse on Cany's Fork. I should have eliminated the villain's lead and come up with him and made good my vow. Now I must halt my search and give myself to public service. I entered the stockade a bitterly disappointed man. Just inside the gate and on the left were the tents occupied by Captains Middleton, Jack and others; for Claiborne had sent a small number of regulars under Lieutenant Osborne. Some two hundred volunteers, commanded by Major Daniel Beasley, who had his quarters in a house outside the east gate. Captain Bailey commanded seventy refugees. The places appeared to be amply garrisoned and I regretted being detained where there was no likelihood of being needed. I believed I should be on my way to Mobile, to seek Dancer there. As I gazed around the big parallelogram, I did not believe any Creek force would openly attack it, let alone capture it. I took my time in advancing to the loom-house, where Captain Bailey had his quarters. As I lounged along, trailing my rifle, I heard fragments of conversation from men sprawled out on the ground. Some expressed the belief the entire Southwest was in for a general Indian War.

Another faction believed, as did General Flournoy, that the hostility displayed by the Creeks was merely a subterfuge to draw the troops away from Mobile so that the place might be easily captured. All agreed that Spanish and English agents were supplying the Creeks with guns.

Men jumped to their feet and stared with approval at Pushmataha, *mingo** of the Six Towns district of the Choctaws, and famous for his war deeds before he was twenty years old. He had opposed Tecumseh's efforts and influence and kept his people from rising against the whites. He was one Indian leader who could and did exercise military discipline over his followers. As he walked toward the east gate, followed by a score of warriors, word was passed that the chief was leaving for St. Stephen, supposed to be a weak point in the line of defenses. He was proud of his rich regimentals, costing Claiborne three hundred dollars in Mobile, and including gold epaulettes, sword, silver spurs, hat and feather. The men gave him a cheer as he led his file of fighters through the gate. We were so strong we did not need them. We were doubly defended by the knowledge that Claiborne had gone to the support of Fort Easley, sixty miles nearer the enemy than was our station.

Shortly after the Choctaws left, twenty or more frightened settlers poured in. Our acre of ground and buildings was becoming congested. Major Beasley appeared on the scene and ordered a line of pickets to be erected sixty feet beyond the east gate to provide more room. This addition would bring his headquarters inside the stockade where it belonged. The men went about their work carelessly and slowly, as if believing it were not necessary. The original east side of the stockade was allowed to remain.

Then I received one of the greatest surprizes of my life. I even forgot Dancer.

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* Chief. Same as Creek *Miko*.

What looked to be a red-headed boy, accompanied by an old man with a white beard, came walking toward me. The boy was carrying a long sword and the old man was trailing a rifle. I doubted the veracity of my eyes. The two, although coming in my direction, had not noticed me. I shouted and waved my hand. The two stopped and stared for a moment; then the smaller figure came running like a deer.

"Good ——, Polly! You down here in this hole?" I exclaimed.

SHE dropped the sword, her father's, and seized my hand. She had cut off some of her hair so her rabbit-skin hat fitted snugly. She was wearing long breeches tucked into moccasins and around her waist was the crimson sash of the old days.

"Jeffry! Jeffry Lang! To think of finding you here! We followed you to Nashville—then lost you. A man said you rode toward Knoxville. Then we found what we believed to be traces of Dancer coming down here. When did you get in?"

"Just now. Polly, you must go at once to Claiborne's headquarters. Greenberry will go with you and tell the general you are a foolish young girl. The general will see you get to New Orleans, where you can take the steamboat to Natchez."

"Finely planned; but never a word about being glad to see us, Joel," she rebuked.

"Glad to see you anywhere else but here. But not down here. There are enough poor women and children here without you. I'll arrange for you to start at once down the river to Stoddart."

"We'll stay here. If women and children are in danger we'll drive it away." And she picked up the long sword.

"Dear girl! You're all that's left of the happy days. I shall always be hungry to see you, to hear you scold, to feel your friendship. But not in this place. If not tied up to garrison duty for a bit, I'd go with you as far as Stoddart, for I believe Dancer is down the Mobile."

"What about my search for that beast?" she hissed. "Joel was a father to me. And he died before I knew the truth."

"The truth? What are you talking about?"

"Oh, it's useless for you to speak that way. Margy has told me. My poor father spent his money as he always did, foolishly, lovingly, bound to make me a fine lady. Joel Lang, I've been living on yours and Joel's money ever since my father's death. And don't dare to deny it."

"What nonsense! What foolish talk! What—"

"Enough. You're poor at lying." Then tears came into her blue eyes and she whispered, "But I love you and Joel for it so much that I shall never again try to tell you about it."

"That Margy is a fool woman," I growled.

"So here I am and here I stay until I find that monster. I speak Spanish and French. I can go where you can not. I'll find that man!"

"God forbid you ever see him! You'll go down the river and to New Orleans."

"We won't quarrel over that now. Not till it's time to leave this place."

And she turned and beckoned for Greenberry to advance. The old man had recognized me, but was keeping in the background, as if fearing my displeasure. He slowly approached, nervously plucking at his beard, and began:

"Not exactly a land of milk and honey, Jeffry; and my being here ain't of my choice. She would come. Even Margy couldn't stop her. So I come along to see she came to no hurt. And I've signed up in Cap'n Bailey's company. She ain't the only woman in the place wearing breeches and ready to fight. Oh, Lawd! What a terrible mess for a lonely old man and a young girl to git into!"

Aside from the Indian danger, it was dangerous for those new to the climate. The sun was brassy hot. The stockade was not high enough to escape the sickly malaria steaming from the surrounding swamps. Counting men, women and children, there were more than five hundred and fifty of us shut up in that one acre. The majority of these knew nothing of war. A lesser number were liable to the fever, as proven by the sick-list. Polly read my thoughts and took my hand and timidly insisted:

"We can't go, Jeffry. We put our names down. You know my father would expect me to stay."

"You have no business here. You do not have to stay here. Your father would blame me for allowing you to stay."

"Joel always said you weren't afraid of anything that walked on legs."

"I'll see her safe to the Mississippi," eagerly assured Greenberry.

"For shame!" she cried, leaning forward and darting an indignant glance at him.

Our talk was interrupted by Major Beasley coming up and pausing to ask me—

"Newcomer?"

"Came less than twenty minutes ago."

"Sign up with Captain Bailey. All raw recruits will go into his company." And he would have passed on had I not remarked:

"The outer west gate should be in place."

I got no farther before he broke in to inquire ironically:

"You're not of the regulars? Not sent by General Claiborne to look after the defenses?"

"No."

"Good. Bailey's company."

And he was walking away and I was staring after him and realizing that here was a danger I had not suspected: the major was puffed up by his own importance and was thoroughly convinced of the security of the place.

"Why didn't you tell him you were at Tippecanoe?" indignantly cried Polly.

"What good, so long as he's satisfied he knows it all?"

As we walked along to the loom-house Polly remarked on the number of people sick with the fever and I impatiently demanded—

"Then why throw your life away by staying here to catch it?"

"I'm seasoned. Seasoned when a baby. I must find the Fletchers and see if I can help Mrs. Fletcher with some of the children." Then she quickly added, "But you, Jeffry? Are you seasoned?"

I was seasoned, having gone through with the fever at the Natchez landing. I reassured her and left her surrounded by the Fletcher children, who hailed her coming joyfully. Then Greenberry went with me to the loom-house and proudly announced that he had brought a fighting-man, and I signed the rolls and was at once entitled to draw rations. Then Greenberry and I walked about the place. He was in a gloomy frame of mind and kept glancing about as if expecting something bad to happen every minute.

"What's the matter with you? Coming down sick?" I anxiously asked.

"I'm seasoned like hickory. But I miss my ration of whisky. None here except what some of the stingy ones are keeping to drink on the sly. Give me a snort of real rye and I'll pull that half-breed Weatherford's hair out of his head—I usually take a nap about this time. Polly sleeps with the Fletchers. If you want a few winks while the women are cooking supper, you can come to me. It's a snug, soul-satisfying place."

His retreat was a blanket spread under a shed back of the Mimms' house. More from disgust with life than from weariness I threw myself down beside him, and to my surprize went to sleep and did not awake until the stars came out. Greenberry showed me where to get something to eat, although it was past the supper-hour. Then we looked for Polly, but she was asleep for the night. Greenberry decided to return to his couch, and I hunted up Captain Bailey. The captain had been educated in Philadelphia and was a most courteous gentleman. Once he learned I had been at Tippecanoe he took me aside and questioned me eagerly. My description of Tecumseh's brother caused him to exclaim:

"It's the prophets, or medicine-men, who are stirring up much of this mischief. They fool themselves. Josiah Francis, or, as we call him, 'Francis the Prophet' has fairly bewitched the Upper Creeks into believing all sorts of foolish things. If it was n't for Francis and his kind I wouldn't lose any sleep here."

"But you're uneasy now?"

"The east gate is up but is choked with sand. You can't close it till the sand's taken away. The outside west gate isn't up, and that will let a brave enemy rush in under the eaves of the guard-house. And I'm afraid that it's a mistake to leave the old row of pickets on the east side. Those caught between the two lines of pickets will be in a bad place. You understand that if we have ample warning of the Creek's advance we ought to be strong enough to repulse them, but with conditions as they are, I'm afraid it may go hard with us."

"Your scouts will bring warning."

"We haven't enough out. They should be miles up the Tombigbee and the Alabama. Tomorrow you'll find there's few, if any, even in the nearest swamp. But we'll pull through."

THE morning of the next day, August twenty-ninth, was very hot and close. Few had been refreshed by the night, and more sick people were reported as I wandered about, waiting for the kettles to cook, and hoping to have a talk with Polly. The sentinel at the east gate called out sharply. His tone of alarm was quickly communicated to those near the entrance and then spread rapidly. Major Beasley and his officers came on the run.

A woman shrieked—

"Injuns coming!"

There followed a frantic search of parents for their children. I ran to the gate just as two slaves passed through the new inclosure and were surrounded by the excited people near the officers' tents. No one knew what was the matter and the slaves' terror was so great they could not speak coherently at first. They rolled their eyes and trembled violently. Being harshly addressed, one of them found his tongue and endeavored to explain.

He and his companion had left the stockade early to look for some cattle. They had seen two dozen painted savages hiding on the edge of the swamp.

"What's that? What's that?" cried Major Beasley.

The poor fellow, the property of Josiah Fletcher, stumbled through his story once more. Then the second slave, owned by John Random, confirmed it.

Major Beasley detailed Captain Middleton and two mounted men to reconnoiter the swamp. As I stood in the gateway and watched them ride off I noticed the sand was banked against the gate in such a manner as to prevent it from being closed. I called a guard's attention to it.

"Gate's all right," he bruskly replied. "If we want it closed it'll be closed. Don't let those niggers scare you."

Middelton and his men remained out and the people in the inclosure quieted down. I ate breakfast with Polly and the Fletchers and then reported to the loom-house. Bailey detailed me duty in the guard-house by the western gate until the mid-day meal. It was tedious work and I would have preferred scouting outside. My companions did not believe the Creeks would attack beyond lying in wait to pick off any one straying from the stockade. After dinner I asked permission to scout the swamp on the east, but Bailey feared this would be a reflection on Middleton's powers of observation.

"They've found nothing," he assured. "If the Indians had jumped them, one at least would have had time to fire gun or pistol. Randon's slave brought in a story last week that had the whole garrison by the ears. He said he had been caught with some of Zachariah McGirth's slaves on the McGirth plantation some fifty miles up the Alabama by Weatherford, and that some of the prisoners described conditions down here. He escaped, he said, and insisted that Weatherford had been planning for several days to destroy this stockade and that he would soon be here. We got all ready to receive them, but none came. Major Beasley believed the slave had lied. Almost every day some one raises an alarm. We're getting used to it."

There was no point in a slave's deliberate lying, but I could understand how fear stirred their imagination into making them see what was not. I called on Polly and found her busy with the several Fletcher children. I looked in on Greenberry in the shed and soon realized he had found, or had been given, some whisky. He was in an amiable, beaming mood and the liquor had changed his prejudice against the stockade to an expressed liking:

"We judge too hastily," he informed me. "There are many lands of milk and honey, and this may well be one of them."

I warned him of the danger of overindulgence, but he insisted he had been seasoned so many times in his long life that liquor was elixir to him. There was nothing to do to kill time, and if not for Polly and Spiller I should have wished myself out of the stockade. Sharpest of all disappointments was the interruption of my search for Dancer. I endeavored to console myself with the thought that he would remain somewhere in the South Country between the Savannah and the Mississippi, and that once I was free to look for him, I would ultimately pick up his trail.

Captain Middleton and his men returned late in the afternoon and Major Beasley was at the gate to receive the report. The captain briefly stated they had visited the ravine and had scouted some distance beyond, had gone north and south and had found no signs.

"Just as I thought!" said Beasley. "They'd tell anything to shirk their work of looking after the cattle. Randon's man has twice brought in a false report. Tie them up and flog them."

It was a brutal exhibition. We had misery enough without inflicting a lashing on the poor slaves. Randon's negro was severely flogged. But when it came the other slave's turn Fletcher stepped forward and said:

"I object. One man might have believed he saw something. But for two to believe the same thing ain't likely. I won't have my nigger flogged. I believe he did see something."

Beasley, quick-tempered, went into a rare rage. I expected him to use his authority as commander to order the flogging to be inflicted. Instead he told Fletcher:

"Very well. But two of us can't give orders here. By ten 'clock to-morrow morning you and your family and slaves be out of this stockade. I'm in command. There isn't room here for your kind. Family and slaves outside the stockade by ten tomorrow morning."

Much downcast, for his family was large and it would be awkward for him to get them down to Fort Stoddart by boat, Fletcher went to break the bad news to his wife.

The morning of the thirtieth brought another hot, red sun, and the malarial mists were steaming from the swamps at an early hour. The garrison appeared to have forgotten yesterday's fear. Fletcher, too, found the place to his liking. As soon as he could gain an audience with Beasley he announced he preferred to have his slave whipped to taking his family away. After a bit of a lecture Beasley said the Fletchers might remain, and then ordered the slave trussed up for the whipping. While these sorry preparations were being made, Randon's slave was leaving the stockade to look for the cattle, his back raw and smarting. Again he saw painted men in the swamp, but this time he remembered his reward for such news and he stole away and gained Fort Pierce, two miles distant on Pine Log creek. We of the garrison simply noted his going forth on his daily errand and then forgot about him. Yesterday's whipping had driven him away and doubtless was the means of saving his life.

So complete was Beasley's confidence in his ability to sustain an attack that at ten o'clock that morning he sent a message to General Claiborne, stating his "ability to maintain the post against any number of Indians."

I found Polly, and she impressed me as being very nervous. I feared she was coming down with the fever. She shook her head, shrugged her slim shoulders and said:

"I'm seasoned, I tell you. But I had a bad dream, Jeffry. Dreams are nonsense, of course, but I haven't shaken it off yet."

She wouldn't tell me what it was and attempted to laugh at it. The complaining of a sick child called her away, leaving me to wander aimlessly about.

It was a weird medley of life filling that acre of ground. The sick were calling for water. Some of the children were fretting so as to make the heart ache with pity. Those in health were playing hide and seek among the houses and tents, oblivious to all but their game. The older men were stretched out on the ground, lazily smoking, or playing cards. The young men were dancing with some of the young women. The matrons were finishing the cooking of the dinner. In the midst of all this idleness, gaiety and sickness was Fletcher's unhappy slave, trussed up and awaiting his whipping. His bare back arched convulsively at times as if already he was feeling the bite of the lash. I wandered to the east gate and shaded my eyes and moodily stared at the tangled swamp growth some four hundred yards away. The sentinel was leaning sleepily against the gate post.

"Nothing suspicious," I remarked.

He smiled tolerantly and replied—

"After you've been here a bit you'll get seasoned to scare-stories."

I observed the bush growth between the edge of the swamp and the gate and remarked:

"The ground ought to be cleared. Too good cover for the Indians."

He eyed me leeringly and asked:

"Who wants to clear and grub that stuff up under this sun? Be fine for Mimms to have it cleared for nothing. But we won't be here long."

He had spoken, and I had heard one of the most accurate prophecies ever uttered.

The sand was still against the gate. Several soldiers were loitering before Beasley's headquarters. I was passing through the opening of the old line of pickets when the garrison drummer took his position to beat the dinner-signal. I watched some children race by me in a mad scramble to be first at the kettles.

THE drummer gave the preliminary tap. It was answered by a scream from the gate behind me. I wheeled, and as one in a nightmare saw a long line of savages springing from cover of the bushes I had just said should be cut down. They were within thirty steps when I discovered them, and I had turned at the first cry of alarm. I was jolted into consciousness of our hideous situation when the onrushing mass raised a terrible war-cry. I stood motionless for perhaps a second and yet I had time to observe them bounding high like demons, naked except for the breech-clout. I had time to observe the grotesque paint-patterns of their faces and to notice that their medicine-men, or prophets, had their faces painted black and were wearing head-dresses of feathers. Nearly all were brandishing new guns which had been secured from British and Spanish agents.

I started for the gate as Major Beasley ran from his house and toward it. He yelled for the guards to close it, while his soldiers rushed to the loopholes. Beasley lacked no courage and he reached the gate and endeavored to swing it shut, but the drifted sand prevented. By the time I reached the inner gateway, now only an opening in the original line of pickets, the enemy were upon the major. They clubbed and tomahawked him to death within a very few moments. Then they were inside the new inclosure and were making for the old gateway.

A prophet was in the lead, dancing and yelling his war-medicine, and the pressure behind him lessened as I shot him through the head. For the prophets were supposed to be protected against knife and bullet. Several warriors picked up the dead man and others began spreading to the original stockade, north and south of the opening. They could have come through and have run over us in those first few minutes of confusion. I gained the pickets south of the old gateway and crouched behind Ensign Chambliss' tent to reload. Several warriors discharged their guns through the loopholes, sending the bullets through the tent and close to me. Others of the garrison now ran up to the stockade and fought for control of the loopholes.

There is nothing of evil that the human imagination can picture which was lacking from the scenes which rapidly followed. The savages had won the eastern gate and were inside the new inclosure and were firing through the pickets at Randon's house and the line of tents where we of the first line of defense were kneeling. This is scarcely correct, for Beaseley's soldiers, at least many of them, were cooped up in the new inclosure together with the savages. They had taken refuge in the house that served as Beasley's headquarters and a part of the big stockade only since the new lines of pickets had been thrown around it. The Creeks also were fighting for control of the loopholes along the pickets north of the old gate, but men in the two houses were pouring a plunging fire into them. Outside of the fort the earth swarmed with nearly a thousand of the fanatics. The Creeks are big men and of great courage. William Weatherford, their half-breed chief, was in command. At the head of the medicine-men was Francis the Prophet, who had been “inspired by Tecumseh's one-eyed brother.

I found Greenberry Spiller crouching beside me and heard him screaming:

“Shoot the men with black faces! Kill their prophets! That'll take the tuck out of 'em!”

This was excellent advice, and already I had one to my credit, and I repeated the cry. Some regulars with bayonets were keeping the enemy from entering the main inclosure. Standing on each side of the old gateway they speared those who would enter, in a very business-like fashion. I yelled to one of these soldiers to take word to the men in the two houses behind him to shoot at the feather-headdresses. Then with my second bullet I killed the man on the other side of the loophole.

The prophets were now dancing about on the other side of the pickets and renewing their medicine which was to cause our bullets to split harmlessly on approaching any magic-encased body. Greenberry secured a loophole and yelled with delight as he got one of these dancers. The soldier must have delivered my message to the two houses as the next volley from them dropped five medicine-men dead in their tracks. With howls of fear many of the savages began to give ground and fall back to the new gate.

Could we have charged them with a hundred bayonets I believe we would have had time to close the gate. And could we have done that we might have stood them off-until their courage oozed away. Yet I doubt the possibility of it, so long as Weatherford was present to direct the fighting. And there was nearly a thousand of them, the pick of his towns. Naturally courageous in war, they were doubly so now because of their fanaticism. While many gave ground and ran away, there were others, clamoring for blood, to fill their places. Outside rose the voice of Weatherford and the wild exhortations of the medicine-men. They not only renewed their fire through the old pickets on the east, but began raking the main inclosure from all sides. The men in the two houses, serving as bastions on the north and south sides of the big parallelogram, raked these walls sufficiently to prevent the horde from exterminating us. As it was, they were taking a fearful toll.

Greenberry ran back to the Mimms house to be near Polly McGin. Captain Jack with his rifle company succeeded in clearing the south wall for a time. Lieutenant Randon still held the guard-house at the outer and open west gate. My captain, Dixon Bailey, took command, now that Beasley was dead, and left the loom-house in the north wall to run up and down all lines, encouraging, exhorting. He sent Captain Middleton to take command of the east section.

Our situation scarcely could have been worse. Captain Middleton and his men rushed heroically by me into the new inclosure to come at hand grips with the Creeks there. The few surviving regulars in Beasley's headquarters came out to die with Middleton just as the building caught fire. I could not see much of the fighting in that sixty-foot wide stretch, formed by the extension of the stockade. I loaded and fired when a bronze figure got in line with my loophole.

On our side of the pickets were the children and women and unarmed men and the soldiers holding the guard-house and the buildings on the north and south lines. Surrounding the stockade on every side were the maddened warriors, risking death to fire through a loophole at any white person, child or ancient, woman or man. It was Bailey, our leader, who steadied us. He did the work of many men.

Above the deafening din we could hear him roaring, "Hold on a little longer! Hold on there! Hold that line! They'll soon get enough!"

And ordinarily this would have been true. But I had seen red men die at Tippecanoe because of an idea; and the horde inside and outside the inclosed acre were being lashed on by the same mad notions. Yet we did continue holding the old gateway on the east. By this time Middleton and practically all his men were dead in the new inclosure, and we did not have to fear for hitting them. We rallied even more desperately and fired such volleys as to mow the savages down in files.

Major Beasley's headquarters was blazing fiercely and there was danger of the flying sparks and brands setting roof-fires. Despite his show of optimism, Captain Bailey understood our peril. He ran up to our line where we were picking of men looting the burning house, and suggested that he and a few seasoned fighters make a dash for Fort Pierce, and bring back reinforcements. None of us believed a single man could reach the luxuriant swamp growth, let alone get to the fort.

"I'll go alone!" he cried. "I can get through and bring men back." And he would have climbed the pickets and risked it if we had not pulled him to the ground.

The riflemen in the houses near the old gate now were able, seemingly, to keep the new inclosure cleared of the enemy. The savages' fire in this quarter began dropping and their howling lost much of its edge. The last of those looting the Beasley house commenced running with their plunder through the outside gate.

"They're quitting! —— em! They've got a bellyful!" screamed one of our men.

Bailey shook his head and told me:

"Go to the Mimms house and tell the men to make more loopholes. This inside gate can be held from there. Weatherford will soon be sending them back at us."

I ran swiftly and passed men and women who were wildly exulting because the savages, as they believed, had ceased fighting. I passed Fletcher's slave, still tied up, but now hanging by the wrists, shot through the head and back. I leaped over the bodies of the dead scattered over the grass, and some of the figures were pitifully small. On entering the house I found a score of Bailey's riflemen at loopholes, from which they had been shooting over the inside east wall and dropping warriors in the new inclosure. I gave the captain's order, and a man with long black hair told the others in a drawling voice:

"That means Cap'n Bailey will make his last stand here. Git to work, fellers."

I GOT up to the small window in the peak of the house and secured an excellent view of the enemy outside the house. I was amazed and horribly discouraged by their numbers. I saw Weatherford, mounted on a black horse, break up a line of men who would have withdrawn with their loot to the swamp. From his gestures I knew he was vehemently upbraiding them. I saw some of the medicine-men dance across the path of these who would retire, and hold up sacred bags and wave their medicine-sticks. Weatherford's influence, or superstition, soon told. Those withdrawing came to a halt; then they dropped their plunder and brandished their weapons. Their howling became general. The entire mass began surging toward the stockade on all sides.

As I hurriedly descended, I met the man with the long black hair. He had stripped to the buff above the waist and was stuffing some tobacco leaves into his mouth as I encountered him. He grimly remarked:

"It's my notion that most of us is going to die." Then he spat in disgust and cried—

"Three hours of fighting and it all don't amount to a ——!"

Three hours! I would have said twenty minutes. Three hours of terrible sights, and all for nothing. I burst from the doorway, intent on finding Polly McGin. The clamor along the inside of the stockade equaled that on the outside. Men and women were trying to plug loopholes where they had no guns to return the murderous fire. The number of bodies on the ground, of both sexes and all ages, had increased since I entered the Mimms house. I desperately stared about for a sight of a small red-head and would have missed the girl entirely if not for a glimpse of Greenberry Spiller's white head. He had discarded his hat and coat and was running as nimbly as a youngster toward Patrick's loom-house. He was carrying his rifle in one hand and an ax in the other.

I darted after him and soon found myself staring into the wide eyes of Bully McGin's daughter. She had removed her coat and he red hair was uncovered. Her right sleeve was rolled back, showing an arm of snowy whiteness, and she was grasping her father's long sword.

"It's the end of the world for us, Jeffry!" she shrilly greeted. "Father'n Joel will soon be asking how we fought. Kiss me, Jeffry, and get to the fighting."

She was so small, so young! It is beyond all power of description. I could not speak as I swung her off the ground and kissed her good-by. Then I was running like a madman toward the inside east gate where the Creeks were renewing their attack. I believed the whole horrible business would be quickly ended, once they poured into the main inclosure. I discharged my rifle into the mass of screaming men and continued running to club my gun. From the Mimms house rifles made a sharp crackling, and where the gateway had been choked by ferocious figures there was now none to be seen. But from the loopholes in the inside line of pickets came spurts of smoke, as those not killed by the rifle volley fought to get the loopholes away from us defenders.

I found myself stripped to the waist without knowing when I shed my upper garments. I found myself wiping blood from a furrow across my right side without knowing when the bullet scraped me. I gained the pickets just as one of our men and a savage fired through the same loophole at the same moment. Both dropped—dead or mortally wounded. I was back in my old position, just south of the inside east gate. Men in the houses on both sides of this opening and the riflemen behind me in the Mimms house were holding the savages back. I heard Weatherford shouting for his men to go through, but to face the stream of lead meant death. The Indians had lost heavily, their dead already greatly outnumbering the red loss at Tippecanoe. Even their Prophets could not safeguard them when it came to rushing through the gateway. Weatherford at last realized this and shouted orders for the warriors outside the stockade to fire the Mimms house.

A man ran from the house north of the gate, screaming:

"A million of them are coming! Fall back! Fall back!"

It made no particular difference whether we fell back, or remained near the gate. By retreating we might gain a few minutes of life; but there were many who were envying Fletcher's slave for having escaped so quickly and painlessly. So we stayed on for a bit and managed to hold our ground. When we retreated from the gate, it was during a lull in the fighting and when our numbers had been sadly reduced. At first the enemy did not know we had abandoned the gate as the few of us took cover among the nearest houses. Outside the stockade all efforts were being made to burn the Mimms house. While many sought refuge in this house, I worked along the north fence to the loom-house. I had no plan except to find Polly McGin. I came upon Greenberry Spiller, shooting through the stockade behind the house. An ax stood against the pickets close to his hand. I secured his attention and without waiting to be asked he jerked his head toward the house. His white beard was stained red with blood from his chin or mouth.

Passing around to the front of the house, I saw Polly McGin in the doorway. She was watching the men streaming by to the Mimms house. I was at her side before she saw me.

"You are still alive, Jeffry?" she softly cried. "It might be a greater mercy if we were all dead and through with it."

"They haven't got us yet," I replied; but I believed it was a matter of a very short time before we must die.

"They've killed many of us. There! They're shooting fire-arrows! They'll be coming soon. Kiss me good-by, Jeffry. Fight hard! Don't be taken alive!" And she tapped the pistol thrust through her red sash to indicate her own purpose.

"Little friend! Little friend!" I managed to say.

Then the infinite pathos of her plight choked me. I began to wish we all had died painlessly before passing through such a hell. She shook off my arm and patted my cheek and crouched before the doorway in advance of me, as if to protect me, the long sword held for a thrust. I swung her behind me as Greenberry Spiller came running from the stockade, his husky voice panting:

"Such a mess! Such a mess!"

But I saw none of the enemy. The attack on the east gate had ceased and allowed us to hear the firing of the riflemen in the guard-house at the west gate. Over head the fire-arrows were thickening. The first few had done no mischief, but now there seemed to be an endless stream of them. We could only stare and wait.

"One's stuck near the ridgepole!" screamed Greenberry, cupping his hands as if he expected to make the men in the Mimms house hear, and as if he believed they could get out on the roof and extinguish the tiny red patch.

"Two—three—four," slowly counted the girl, as other blazing arrows lodged in the tinder-dry roof.

There was no way of killing the sheet of flame that quickly extended from end to end of the house as the different patches of fire merged into one. A demoniacal chorus greeted the appearance of the flames and the billowing smoke. As if by magic the string of adjoining sheds and outbuildings began to blaze. The refugees poured from the building to find other shelter; but my friend of the long black hair remained in the upper window, shooting over the stockade. I saw the smoke swirling about him and the flames almost upon him, but he kept his place, deadly up to the last second of life. I saw him sag half way across the sill, his gun falling to the ground; then remains of the roof fell and the four walls became a fiery shell.

Sparks and flaming brands set other fires; and the arrows continued. The whole inclosure was filled with smoke and resounded with the shrieks of the helpless. If it were possible for me to picture what I saw and heard I would refrain. There are sights which must not be told about.

The retreat of the surviving riflemen from their commanding position in the Mimms house was the signal for Weatherford to unleash his mad horde. The savages poured into the main inclosure and began hunting down their scattered victims. The loom-house, perhaps because of its position close to the stockade, had not been fired. Captain Bailey came rushing to it with the survivors of his company. With the savages in sight we took the offensive again and our fire was most deadly. From windows and doors streams of bullets were sent where the enemy were packed the closest. Those who had sought refuge elsewhere now endeavored to join us, and many were killed in that endeavor. Old Samuel Mimms was one of these. He could walk but slowly and was shot and scalped within a few rods of our position. Greenberry Spiller shot his slayer.

Dr. Thomas Holmes, a surgeon of the garrison, entered the house from a rear window. He was carrying the ax Greenberry had left leaning against the stockade. He announced:

"I've cut two pickets loose but left them standing. If we make a break some few of us may reach the swamp."

A band of warriors now swept down on the house. Their mouths were opened wide, but so great was the din we could not hear their cries of exultation. Captain Bailey lurched back from a window and shouted:

"All is over!"

We staggered them with a volley, but a dozen rushed the doorway. I met their knife-thrusts and ax blows with a clubbed gun. Shots from the windows left but four before me. I shouted for the women to go through the pickets. My frenzied efforts were fast reducing my strength. Then Polly ducked under my arm and was in front of me, firing the pistol she had saved for herself and flashing the long sword. And she thrust so fast and viciously that three men were down, clawing at their bronzed throats before I could sweep her behind me and strike weakly at the fourth man, who promptly turned and ran.

A negro woman, Hester, screamed—

"We're burning!"

There was no question of our waiting longer. The loom-house was blazing over our heads.

I seized Polly under my arm and ran to a rear window and dropped her to the ground. The projecting stockade enclosed us on three sides, the house closing the south side. We were in a smoke filled well. Besides Polly there was only one other woman, Hester.

DR. HOLMES removed the pickets and with the two women in the middle of fifteen desperate men the race for the swamp commenced. Captain Bailey was shot and died at the foot of a cypress stump on the edge of the swamp. Hester, carrying a bullet in her breast, took the lead to show us some canoes on the lake. Polly and I were now bringing up the rear, for I halted to carry Bailey. The brave fellow was dead and I placed him on the ground. The stockade was crackling, and smoke from the burning buildings was climbing high. In the west the sun was wallowing in red and gold. The fighting had lasted since the noon hour, or five hours, and had cost the lives of four hundred refugees and their defenders. Polly was the only white woman to escape, and not a single child escaped. The Creeks had lost four hundred fighting men in killed and wounded.

Polly whispered:

"We must hurry! The woman said she would find canoes for us."

I believed we were safe for the time, and the reaction from momentarily expecting death for her had left me weak. She was ahead of me in the narrow path, and was carrying the naked sword over her shoulder. She turned to speak, but before she could utter a word the wild expression of her face caused me to wheel about. Then I was grappling with a huge savage, whose greasy body was difficult to hold. Behind him were several others. I went down, with a hold on the fellow's neck which would break it with another ounce of pressure. Three of them bounded over us to seize the girl. Their tall figures, dodging about, blocked my view of her. One reeled back with blood flowing from a long rip in his arm. The other two hesitated, glaring at her hungrily, but afraid of the sword. She stamped her foot impatiently and crept toward them. The wounded man shouted:

"She is medicine! This is a strong medicine against the white man!" And she stooped as I was struggling to break my clawing opponent's neck and pricked my throat until the blood ran.

Polly lowered her sword and boldly walked up to him and pushed his hand aside. One of the warriors snatched the sword from her. I loosened my hold on the half-strangled man and got to my feet. An ax was raised to brain me but Polly stepped in the front of the man and hissed something in Spanish. Over her shoulder she told me—

"Tell them Weatherford is your friend."

"Lamochattee will be angry if the white medicine-woman or I am hurt," I said in the Creek tongue.

Their arms ached with killing, and they were impatient to be with their rejoicing companions. I added:

"We are Español. We were caught in the fort by our friends' attack. Take us to our friend Weatherford."

"They are Español," mumbled the man whose neck I had tried to break.

"Lamochattee, the Red Eagle, will be angry if we are harmed," I continued.

They feared their chief. There was considerable plunder awaiting a division. If Weatherford repudiated my claims to friendship I could be killed at the camp.

During the fight in the stockade Weatherford had endeavored to have the women and children spared. And Polly, red-headed, and carrying and using the long sword with deadly dexterity, was believed to be "medicine." Without a word they tied my hands at my back and pushed me into the path behind Polly. We left the swamp and passed through the open with the smoking ruins of the fort on our right and traveled for a mile east of the stockade where the savages had retired to pass the night and dance their many scalps.

CHAPTER XI

THE WHITE TOWN OF KUSA

WEATHERFORD'S weary warriors were smoking and feasting. The wounded were rubbing bear-fat into their hurts. Scalps were being trimmed and stretched on small hoops. Negroes, spared and held as slaves, were frantically trying to serve their new masters.

Our arrival brought some of the men crowding around us, and a Creek who had lost an eye in the day's fight loudly demanded I be tortured to make his missing eye stop aching. Our captors shouted that we were "Españols," the Creeks using the Spanish word to denote that race. They added that Polly was a medicine-woman. The man with the ripped arm displayed his wound and insisted the long-knife was medicine to do such damage. The girl's red locks and the whiteness of her skin interested the savage warriors. One after another gingerly stretched forth a hand to touch her hair. I explained to her they believed her and the sword to be medicine, whereat she boldly plucked the weapon from the man carrying it, and no effort was made to take it from her.

In me they only saw a tall, rangy prisoner, begrimed with smoke and caked with dried blood; one who gave every promise of dying stubbornly and affording much amusement. Now that they had had time to take account of their own dead, the reckoning was not to their liking.

My captors were willing to sell me for a share of the plunder others had secured, and the man who had pricked my throat shrewdly reminded that scalps were worth five dollars at Pensacola.

"What are they saying now?" sharply asked Polly, as clawing hands gripped my shoulders and tugged me back and forth.

"Some of them want to buy me."

"They mean evil, Jeffry!" she shrilly cried.

Then she brandished her sword and raised her voice and began calling loudly in Spanish. I had picked up enough of the language to know she was asking for some one in authority to come to her.

The crowding, jostling group began giving ground on one side, and I saw Weatherford, tall and of commanding bearing, shouldering his way to where we stood. Behind him, and moving with dancing steps, came Francis the Prophet. His red name was Hillis Hajo, or "Crazy Medicine." In one hand he was holding high his medicine-bag, in the other he was waving his medicine-wand; and as he danced his way behind his chief he sang a medicine-song. The Indians on all sides quickly gave ground.

"Help us. We are Español," I said in Creek.

"We are Spanish," cried Polly in that tongue.

Weatherford frowned at us, but sternly demanded:

"Have we not killed enough without killing this prisoner? The woman with the medicine-hair is Español. Do we kill a woman of our friends at Pensacola?"

Francis the Prophet in turn addressed the grim circle, saying:

"Many brave men of our people have died today because they would not listen to their prophet. A voice of a ghost tells me this white man is worth more to us alive than dead. He can tell us how many Long Knives are at Mobile. He can tell us how many big canoes our friends, the Mikilisi—Englishmen—have at Mobile, ready to attack the town."

"My people will burn Mobile, not the Mikilisi," announced Weatherford. "My children's arms ache from killing today. They will ache more at Mobile. There are carts there and many goods to haul away in them. Many prisoners are waiting for you. You are foolish men to kill this man. He can be sold for much new cloth, guns, and knives. Lamochattee will buy this man. What man owns him? What is his price?"

Our captors all claimed a share in me, and their leader soon reached an agreement with the chief. Weatherford then sternly ordered me—

"Walk at my heels if you would live."

"The white woman?" I asked.

"She will not be hurt. They say she is medicine. She has medicine hair."

"She can go where she will?"

"She can walk inside this camp where she will."

I repeated this to Polly, who promptly stepped to my side. Francis the Prophet commanded—

"Tell the woman to cover up the long knife." I did so and Polly sheathed the weapon, and we followed Weatherford to the north side of the camp.

Two negro prisoners brought us food and water. Polly could eat nothing, as the effects of the terrible experience had left her weak and nervous. I spread some blankets and insisted she lie down, but she was in such a troubled state of mind that I sat beside her and stroked her head and tried to talk her into a better mood.

She would clutch my hand between hers and keep silent for a bit. Then she would clap her hands over her eyes in a futile effort to shut out some horrible picture, and would groan:

"Oh, the poor little ones! The Fletcher children! Captain Bailey's little sick boy! Oh, God! Make it up to them this second! Amen."

And so on, until well into the night. Suddenly she became quiet, overcome by exhaustion. And so afraid was I of awaking her, if I moved, I remained by her side through the long hours, holding her hands.

She was awake before sunrise, and her regret on learning I had slept none helped her to a better frame of mind. Or else sleep had restored the old battling spirit of the McGins. The camp began to stir and come to life, and sinister figures glided through the rising mists. Polly rose and insisted I lie down on her blankets. She beckoned to a negro to come to us; and as the man obeyed, shivering with terror, she told him to bring fresh water and food. He soon came back carrying two kettles, but I refused to eat alone. So she broke her fast and sat beside me while I slept.

I could have slept the clock around, but after an hour of unconsciousness I was aroused by the toe of a moccasin prodding my ribs. I opened my eyes to find Polly on her feet and to hear her saying:

"Let him alone. He needs rest."

It was Weatherford. He stared down at me gloomily and ordered:

"Get up and come with me. Tell the white woman it is bad for you to be left here. She will be safe. She can come with us, or stay. We go to bury our dead. My children will feel like killing a white man when they see how many brave men we have lost."

I explained this to Polly, who was sensible enough to realize even the prisoner of Weatherford might not be safe once the chief left the camp. I urged her to remain, as the savages held her in awe because of her fiery hair, her fighting courage, and her skill in handling the long sword.

"I'll stay here," she readily agreed. "To see what you must see would be worse than death."

Then followed the horror of entering the ruins of the stockade. Only the blockhouse at the southwest angle remained of all the buildings. A portion of the pickets also were standing. Already buzzards were collecting from every horizon, and dogs, gone wild, were skulking like ghouls among the smoking débris. The bodies of white men, women, and children were strewn about the inclosure, as were the remains of many Creeks. Very few negroes were killed in the fighting. I pass over the indignities of that terrible butchery and only wish I might erase all memory of the fearful scene from my mind. It is to Weatherford's credit that he did endeavor to prevent indiscriminate slaughter, once his Creeks got inside the stockade, and that he did persist in his endeavors until his own men glared at him murderously and in their mad blood lust threatened him with clubs and axes. Many victims were burned in the houses. The dead were also scattered outside the stockade and were even found in the neighboring woods. These last had fled the burning inclosure and were killed after the small band escaped through the pickets to the swamp.

Under Weatherford's direction the work of burying the dead warriors was commenced smartly enough, but the men were too impatient to be off, attacking Mobile, Fort Pierce, Fort Stoddart, to raid and kill up and down the country. It soon became apparent that the Creeks did not relish the gruesome business, and they refused to work longer when Francis the Prophet came up dancing and shrieking:

"Our brave men are happy in the spirit-land. Their voices are telling my ears we must go out now and kill! kill! kill!"

The grave-diggers retreated in a body and Weatherford followed. He ordered the wounded men to be put in canoes and taken up river to the Coosa towns. He sent a band to reduce Fort Pierce, but these soon returned to report the small garrison had fled down the river. This increased the savages' desire to proceed against Mobile, but no united effort could be made until the various bands returned from killing whatever few outlying settlers had fortified themselves in their cabins.

AS WE were walking back to the camp Weatherford suddenly told me:

"You are not Español. You are a Long Knife."

"I am your prisoner," I replied; for it was useless to attempt any further deceit.

"You and the medicine-woman will go up the river to my towns. I will keep you to trade for some brave warrior if the Long Knives capture one. Or to kill if they kill one who is a prisoner."

I found Polly McGin and told her we would be leaving immediately. She was eager to go. Any place was better than camp, with the heavens filling with buzzards and the smoke from the smoldering ruins tainting the air and staining the serene blue sky. She was ordered into the first dugout to leave. She insisted that she be allowed to go with me; and there was in her gaze despair miserable to behold as the paddlers started upstream, and she stared back at me. And it was agony to know I was helpless, and to stand there and watch her until the dugout vanished around the first bend. Our border history was filled with even more terrible separations, for, at least, she was safe and I was living on sufferance.

If I could not go in the same dugout with her I endeavored to follow closely. But as canoe after canoe set forth and I tried to enter each, I was violently pushed back. The malignant scowls turned on me indicated what would have been my fate had not Weatherford bought me. At last I stood back from the bank, benumbed and indifferent to what might be in store for me. Weatherford had noticed the murderous glances cast at me. He came up and dropped a small collar of wampum over my head, and loudly proclaimed:

"This white man is the Red Eagle's prisoner. This string around his neck tells all my people Red Eagle must find his prisoner unhurt when he goes up the Coosa to look at him. The string shields him from all harm so long as he stays in the village." Then to me he said:

"You go to the white town of Kusa. It is a very old town, and few live there now. It still is a white town, a peace town. Close by are new houses. They are not a part of Kusa. Keep in the old town and you will not be hurt."

One of the paddlers in the dugout I was to enter spoke up and asked—

"If the white man goes outside of Kusa shall he die?"

"Long Claw knows the white man will be the prisoner of the warrior who catches him, if he runs away from the white town. Red Eagle does not tell a warrior what he shall do with his own prisoner."

And I knew Long Claw, of the Wild-Cat Clan, was my enemy and I began to observe him more closely. Among his painted companions he was noticeable because of two long welts down the right side of his face where he had been slashed in some fight.

THE glory of ancient Kusa had departed. De Soto had found it a flourishing town of much political importance and influence. From the earliest days it had been a white, or peace town, where one who had killed without premeditation, might find sanctuary. Now my tedious trip over the river was ended and I found myself an unguarded prisoner in the ruins of old Kusa. What few people had lived there had shifted their quarters to new houses adjoining Kusa and outside the peace circle. These new houses were built since Tecumseh incited the Upper Towns to declare war on the Seventeen Fires. And had not Hull surrendered his army and Detroit, thereby impressing nearly all red nations with the belief that Great Britain was invincible, I do not believe the Creeks would have lifted the red ax. I had surrendered with Hull. As a result I was cooped up a prisoner of the Creeks with slow torture waiting me should I cross the boundary of the village.

I selected for my quarters the least dilapidated of the cabins. Long Claw lived close by in the new town. During the journey up the river he expressed his hatred of me at every opportunity, and I would have fared evilly if not for the little wampum collar around my neck. He hated me for the color of my skin, and because his brother was among the killed at Mimms' stockade. That he preferred keeping watch on me, hoping to catch me out of bounds, to joining any of the numerous war parties now scouring the South Country, evidenced how great was his desire to make me his victim. I felt the menace of his espionage. Reason told me he must sleep at times, yet night and day I felt he was just across the line, watching.

On the second day of my arrival I met a warrior walking through the old town. I halted him by standing in front of him; and I asked:

"Just where is the line I must not cross? Are any of the new houses inside the line? does it reach to the edge of the river bank?"

He eyed me sullenly and answered:

"The air is good here among the old houses. The light is good. Food and water are brought here. If the rain comes and the roof leaks put more bark on it."

"Red Eagle will be very angry if his prisoner is hurt." And I fingered the string of wampum.

"Lamochattee has spoken. His children understand his words. He has put a strong medicine around a white neck. He has sent a white man to a white town. If the man throws away the wampum and leaves the white town he will hear ghosts laughing at him."

"Long Claw may kill inside a white town and think no one will know who did it."

He eyed me scornfully and replied:

"Is Long Claw a foolish man? Will he spoil his medicine for all his days for one white man?" And he brushed by me and entered the new town.

It was laid out with an idea to permanency and strictly followed the Creek plan of town-building. There was the council-house, some thirty feet in diameter and with its twelve foot roof supported by eight posts. The builders had not bothered to erect this on a terrace, as is usually done, for the east bank of the Coosa at this point is high enough to escape a sudden rise in the river. There was the public-square, inclosed by four long sheds. There was the chunkey-yard, extending to the river bank, and swept smooth to accommodate the national game of "chunkey." In this yard was the usual slave-post. This post gave me an idea. If I could get no definite information from the Creeks, I decided to get into communication with one of the negro slaves.

I went to the north line of Kusa and sat down close to the south side of the chunkey-yard. Very soon I detected Long Claw keeping watch, doubtless hungry to catch me over the dividing line. I stayed there until I saw a slave bringing my kettle to my cabin. I ran back, and as he placed the kettle on the ground and would have retreated, I ordered him to carry it inside the cabin. Then I blocked the entrance and demanded—

"Where is the white woman with the red hair who was taken prisoner at Fort Mimms?"

"Let me go! They will lash me!"

"You know the woman I mean. Where is she?"

"Imukfa."

I stepped aside and allowed him to dart by me. If the slave had spoken the truth I had taken a long step. Now remained the problem of getting into communication with her; and when the time was ripe to essay joining her. Some sixty miles were between us, but she was deep in the Creek country, and to find her and take her away would require a mountain of good-luck and the most careful planning. As I ate my meat and vegetables I began examining possible schemes which would unite us and permit us to escape from captivity. Some fifty warriors and as many women and children were close by, but I could not go among them, nor did they care to enter the old town. Yet in such a gathering there must be one, I told myself, I could use to some advantage. I began visiting the dividing line behind the house of the *miko*, or village chief. In this dwelt the *miko's* family and the Beloved Men, as his counselors were called. There were several children in the *miko's* family. One of these, a wild-eyed young rascal, appeared to be curious about me. I caught him spying around the corner of the house, and pretended not to see him. When I did notice him and tried to get him to come to me, he scuttled away as if afraid.

After several days of such attempts, I ignored him. Then, as I was lying on the river bank, he suddenly dropped down near me. He was twelve or fourteen years old and had a very intelligent face. I gave him no heed and after a long silence he proudly announced:

"My father, the *miko*, is a great man. He will kill all the white people."

"His son will be a great chief and lead many warriors," I replied.

"My father, the *miko*, has four girls and one son. He says his son must be a great man."

I waited for a minute, or until I could see that he was restless under the silence, and remarked:

"The only son can go where he will. He lives with men. He hears their talk. That is good. It tells him how to be a great man."

"A runner comes from Lamochattee to the *miko*, my father. The son will be in the council-house to-night and hear the talk. Girls must keep away." This was said with much importance.

"Lamochattee is a great warrior. He will listen to the great *miko*, your father. Girls are not allowed in a council-house. Their place is with the women."

This pleased him much. He tried to suppress his satisfied smile. He held his head up and thrust out his small chin and importantly announced:

"The runner's talk says the Españols ask Lamochattee and the *miko*, my father, not to burn Mobile. I heard the *miko* tell the Beloved Men they would talk about it."

This referred, as I was to learn later, to the letter of Manique, Spanish governor of Pensacola, to Weatherford, begging the Creek leader not to carry out his plans of destroying Mobile on the grounds it did not belong to the Americans, but "to true Spaniards," who would soon recapture it.

"What are the Americans doing?"

He leaped to his feet and ran back to the new town and I knew I had blundered. A question put him on his guard. Another time I would know better. Praise for his father, praise for his small self, would set him to babbling. Several days passed and the boy did not come. Once more I attempted to question the slave, but when I called on him to take the kettle inside he deposited it so hurriedly on the ground as to spill half its contents and ran away rapidly. After that he timed his visits to coincide with my absence from the cabin. I tried remaining indoors, but so long as I did so my food was held back. Then I realized the fellow had been warned and sadly frightened by his owner. I did not believe Polly McGin was in any danger, but I was continually thinking of her depressing fate, of her loneliness and the miserable routine of her life. And each day found me more desperate in my determination to reach her. I became so morbid in thinking along this line that at times I told myself it would be better if we both died, trying to escape, than to live longer under such dreary conditions.

Then came a wind-storm and, acting on an impulse, I left the town to start for Imukfa. It was madness and might have cost my life by inches if I had not detected a man entering the ruins as I was stealing away. I was well beyond the boundary, but not so far I could not regain my cabin by the time Long Claw and several others came to the door. I was on my blankets pretending to sleep when they stole in. Long Claw kicked me in the head with his moccasined foot, and the next moment I was on my feet and had sent him crashing against the logs with a blow to the chin.

Before his companions could carry on the attack I fiercely demanded:

"What do you men mean by attacking Lamochattee's prisoner? How dare you strike the prisoner of Lamochattee?"

"White man, you were seen outside this white village," hissed one of the men.

"Who says that talked in a dream, or has a crooked tongue. I have been sleeping here for a long time. Take that man away. Lamochattee will talk to the next man who attacks me in a white town."

THEY were perplexed. They had no desire to violate the ancient rights of captor and prisoner. Long Claw of the Wild-Cat Clan was insensible. Their hesitancy convinced me they were not sure I had been outside the village. To my great relief they picked up their friend and retreated. I heard nothing more about the affair, although I stayed awake almost all night, prepared to go down fighting. The *miko* must have taken a hand and ordered Long Claw to beware of Weatherford's vengeance. Had the proof of absence from the white circle been positive, Long Claw could have done with me as he wished. A few days later several large dogs appeared in the village. These were entirely different from the curs usually acting as scavengers and were kept in an inclosure. Now I wished I had found a plan of escape before these savage trackers were added to my difficulties. The more I was watched and the greater the obstacles I must overcome, so much the more did my desperate purpose urge me to find Bully McGin's daughter.

The strain of my worry and impatience was broken for a day by an unexpected incident. I was on the river bank when I saw the *miko's* boy playing about several dugouts. I watched him, hoping he would come to me, and saw him grow boisterous in his play and leap into the dugout and lay about him with a small ax, slaying many imaginary enemies. In his excitement he tripped and fell violently, banging his head on the side of the dugout. Into the river his limp body slid and he was drowning when I took to the water.

"He is running away! He has left the white town!" screamed a voice; and I knew Long Claw believed he had his chance.

I swam toward the boy, who was floating unconscious with only the top of his head showing. Several guns banged and bullets struck the water. Long Claw screamed:

"Take him alive! To the canoes!"

Coming up with the drowning boy I lifted his head from the water and began kicking ashore just as the dugouts put off. Exclamations of amazement ran along the bank as the men and women beheld the boy. A deep voice commanded:

"Don't touch the white man! He brings my son!"

There was a dugout on each side of me as I neared the landing of the new town and a paddler reached down and snatched the boy from my grasp. My feet touched bottom and I walked ashore to where Long Claw was exulting. He leaped forward and smote me on the shoulder and proclaimed:

"The white man is the prisoner of Long Claw of the Wild-Cat Clan."

The *miko* was concerned only with the limp form now stretched out on the bank. He was a man of middle age and had the bearing and features of a leader. Long Claw and his friends seized me and began dragging me away from the bank. A woman told a woman:

"He left the peace. They will burn him."

Another said—

"They will tie him and throw him to the dogs."

The half-drowned boy began making a gasping noise under the deft manipulations of two men. Then he choked and writhed and groaned loudly and fought the hands which had saved him. Not until then did the *miko* take his gaze from the sufferer. In a thunderous voice he cried:

"Stop! Where do you take the white man?"

Long Claw sullenly answered:

"He is my prisoner. He was caught outside the white circle of old Kusa. Lamochattee said he belonged to the man who caught him outside the peace circle. Long Claw was the first to touch him and claim him as prisoner."

The *miko* stared at Long Claw as if not seeing him. He was weighing the problem. The unwritten law was explicit on the status of a man who voluntarily, or through ignorance, dropped his robe of protection by wandering outside the safety zone. As three men would have dragged me away, the chief spoke again, saying:

"Let the white man stand alone. We must talk about this. If he is the prisoner of Long Claw, he shall go with Long Claw."

"The old law of our people names him the prisoner of the man who catches him outside the peace town. Kusa ends at the river bank. No town, white or red, can spread over water," confidently replied Long Claw.

The *miko* cast a glance back to where his boy was sitting up, coughing and wheezing and wildly wondering what had happened to him. Then to my enemy he said—

"If a river flows through a town, that part of the river is in the town and is a part of the town."

Long Claw haughtily replied—

"Old Kusa stands on this bank. It does not stretch across to the other bank."

"Let the white man stay here while this is talked about," commanded the *miko*. "He is not to be hurt. Let the Beloved Men follow me." And he turned and went away.

The laws of the red nations, although unwritten, are inexorable. Long Claw squatted before me and taunted:

"They say a white man will die and be a slave of my brother's ghost. They say he will die very slow. They say the claws of a Wild-Cat man holds what it grips."

I looked over his head. The boy came forward and sat down beside me. His mother was watching him with her soul in her eyes, but did not offer to coddle him. Long Claw continued his threats and wicked promises. Suddenly, in a sudden outburst of anger, I told him:

"A voice tells me you will soon be with

your brother. The voice says a man who can not capture a prisoner in battle should have no prisoners. The voice of a dead Creek warrior says your heart grows weak in a fight and you try to take what brave men have captured."

He raised his club, but one of his friends caught his arm. The impulse died in a second and he jeered:

"The white man is cunning. He thinks he can die quick. Long Claw will wait. He will keep the white man alive for three or four sleeps."

So we waited, surrounded by the curious circle. Then the boy rose to his feet and hurried to meet his father, the *miko*, who slowly came from the council-house followed by the Beloved Men. There was nothing to be read in his strong face. He entered the circle and his advisers grouped on each side of him. After nearly a minute of silence he announced:

"We have talked. This is what your *miko* and his Beloved Men tell you. When a prisoner in a white town leaves that town of his own will, or because he does not know where the white circle runs, he is the prisoner of the man who captures him, and that man can do with him as he wishes."

Long Claw made a clucking sound and rose to place a hand on my shoulder. The *miko* continued:

"The council talk is not ended. The council finds that when a prisoner runs to save the life of one of our people he drags the white circle with him as if it were a long rope around his waist. The white man carried the circle with him into the water when he went to save a child of the Creeks, the son of your *miko*. This is the talk of the *miko* and his Beloved Men. The white man will be led back to his house. He has not been outside the white circle. No man can hurt him until he leaves the circle."

Long Claw was wild with rage.

"When Lamochattee hears a prisoner can leave a white town and not be the prisoner of the man who catches him he will be angry," he cried.

"Lamochattee is a great warrior and our leader. He is very strong. But older and stronger than he is the law of the white town. When Lamochattee hears about what this man did he will say the *miko* and his Beloved Men talked wisely. The man of the Wild-Cat Clan should be shaken by his shoulders to get some sense in his head. Take the white man back to his house."

This ended that particular matter, but Long Claw's animosity was now wearing on me. I even feared his deep hatred might tempt him to break the ancient law and seek to murder me while I slept. This living alone with only my worries for company began to affect my judgment. To find I was being spied upon when I walked about, and to know eager assassins would be quick to seize me if they could catch me outside the village limits, gradually wore my nerves to the quick. There came a stormy day with a promise of a dark and stormy night. My continuous brooding threw me into an excess of impatience and self-reproach. When darkness came I stole to the river bank, determined to float down stream and strike across to the Talapoosa towns, let the result be what it would. Doubtless this was madness, but I had been a captive in Canada and I could not endure a second period of captivity in aruined Creek town. I scarcely had gained the bank when a man came up to me in the darkness, and I heard his teeth chatter as I drew back to strike him. Then he clutched my arm and warned me I was being watched and would be dragged from the water as soon as I entered it. The moment he spoke I recognized him as the slave who brought me my kettle.

On the next day the *miko's* boy came to me as I sat watching the river. His face was very serious, and without the usual preliminary silence he said:

"You are bad flesh. You fight my people. Men in the Warriors' House watch you all the time. They will be glad if you run away. You pulled me from the water. The *miko*, my father, says you would have been caught last night if you had run away. The *miko*, my father, says you are Lamochattee's prisoner. The *miko*, my father, says you will stay here with the string of wampum around your neck unless you are a foolish man."

"The *miko* knows you tell me this?" I asked.

He tore bits of grass from the bank and tossed them in the air as if testing the wind and was silent for a minute. Then he said:

"When the storm blew up a voice told my father you were foolish and would leave the white town. The Warriors' House faces south. Sharp eyes were watching for you to run away. A black man found you."

Then he abruptly left me. The *miko* had expected me to run for it and had sent the slave to warn me. The boy had been sent to stress the warning. Several days passed before he came near me again.

THE dull round of eating and sleeping and hating myself was interrupted one day by an explosive yelping north of the new town. I was lying on the ground, trying not to think when the first cry sounded. I became interested as it was repeated and answered by men in the village across the line. I shifted my position so I could look between the two houses forming the south side of the public square. Men and women passed through my lane of vision, and all were making for the river. I hurried to the bank and gazed upstream. A man was paddling swiftly down the current and howling something I could not catch. When he landed, all the population of the town were waiting to receive him. This, perhaps, was the one time during my stay in old Kusa that I was not under surveillance. But I did not think of flight. It was evident the newcomer had brought some important information.

Standing erect, he waited a moment until all were silent; then he flung both hands above his head and shouted—

"The Long Knives are on the upper Coosa!"

A chorus of yelps and howls greeted this dramatic piece of news. The warriors brandished their weapons, and those who had axes sent them whirling high in the air to be dexterously caught as they fell. Then the *miko* assumed charge of the messenger and escorted him to the council-house, followed by the Beloved Men. The effect on me was as marked as it had been on the Creeks. I had a wild desire to leap and shout. I slipped into my old habit of seeing pictures. Files of riflemen in their fringed hunting shirts, the border men of Virginia, Kentucky, and the Tennessee Fires were moving along the Coosa, seeking payment for the bloody debt incurred at Fort Mimms.

It was imperative I reach Polly McGin and take her away from the Talapoosa. There was a definite refuge awaiting her in the army of American riflemen up the Coosa. With her rescued, there was my duty calling me to join the invaders. I loitered near the line separating the old and new towns, but there was not even a murmur from the council-house. I burned with impatience to be away. I could not understand why I had tamely submitted so long to captivity. Worked up to a high state of wrath, I strode back to my cabin, vowing it never should be said a Lang was rescued from a Creek town by his countrymen. My face burned at the possible ignominy of having Greenberry Spiller among those who might come to old Kusa and find me a prisoner.

My kettle was steaming by the door. As I stooped to pick it up there came from around the corner the tremulous, mellow voice of an African saying—

"Mass'r Old Hick'ry's on the Coosa!"

He was gone before I could halt him and demand more detailed knowledge. My heart felt as if it was swelling to a bursting point and my throat choked. General Andrew Jackson, Old Hickory, the idol of that little raw army he had refused to disband far from home, was on the Coosa! Andy Jackson, the idol of Tennessee, was come to revenge the Creek butcheries! I told myself this over and over, and I knew that with darkness I would be outside the white circle.

As the day closed the sky became overcast with a threat of rain. I ate heartily of my meat and vegetables and secured a stout club from the clutter by the door. As one who walks through his own village streets, I made for the east side of the town and took what I believed the most direct route for Imukfa. The *miko* and his Beloved Men would be in council over this sudden problem of Jackson's little army, and Long Claw and his friends should have something more important on their minds than a solitary prisoner in a ruined white town.

I soon found the path connecting the Talapoosa with the Coosa and swung along this briskly for several miles before hearing any sound other than that of owls and other night life. I felt a wonderful uplift from the moment I learned that Jackson was coming against the Creek Nation. The faint baying note sounded twice before I could dismiss our riflemen and Polly McGin from my thoughts and realize I was in danger.

TO BE CONTINUED

ONE HAITIAN NIGHT

A Complete Novelette by William P. Barron

Author of "Mississippi Moonshine," "A Wife in Every Port," etc.

THE *Maggie May* was six hours out from Galveston, and Captain Daugherty was in the little chart room, staring at the floor in an effort to firmly fix in his mind the three typewritten sheets of instructions he had been handed by the manager of the fruit company just before he left port. A long narrow shadow fell across the captain's line of vision. He looked up to see "Slim," the Portygee, standing in the doorway.

"Captain, sir," Slim explained in his slow precise English, "I have come to request the honor of an interview."

"All right, Slim," the captain agreed heartily. "Now is as good a time as any. Speak right out. What is it?"

"I hear, sir, that the *Maggie May* goes not to Porto Cortez this trip, but touches at Havana for sugar and then is to make Haiti."

"That's what these here orders say," agreed the captain, secretly wondering for the hundredth time how a captain's cabin news gets diffused so quickly over a ship. "But our sailin' time's just about the same. I figger on makin' Galveston on the return trip in just about the same number of days. Is there any special reason why you want to get back to Galveston or somethin'?"

"No, sir, Captain, I can't say there is, but—"

Slim hesitated, looking down at the deck, turning his cap in his hand.

"Go on, Slim. What is it?" the captain urged kindly.

He was not irritated by Slim's diffident slowness. He rather liked it. It was a sore point with him that the modern A.B. seems born without the old-time bump of reverence for the skipper, which Captain Daugherty believed was his due. Having acquired that idea from his father an old forty-niner wind-jammer despot, who argued with a marlin-spike and regarded disrespect as justifiable homicide.

"Come on, Slim, spit it out! I ain't goin' to bite you."

Thus encouraged, Slim stepped inside the chart room and closed the door.

"Captain, sir, I will impart a great secret—if—if—you will oblige me with—if—"

"All right, Slim! Full steam ahead! Mum's the word with me. I know enough about you boys to hang half the crew, but I don't never talk. What you say will be safe with me."

"Captain, sir. If we make Haiti, I know—or rather I can gain access to the place where is concealed the gold of Christophe. Would you join me in trying to secure same?"

"One Haitian Night," copyright, 1925, by William P. Barron.

Slim's voice had gradually lost power until it became only a husky whisper as the captain looked at him reproachfully.

"Slim, I thought better of you than that. I did so. Thought you had some sense—more brains than to be took in by them old, worm-eaten yarns about buried pirate gold and Cap'n Kid's treasure an' sich like trash, an' then have you come, fresh from Bill an' Ed an' Big 'Un with some tale that blamed boy Joe has dug up out of one of them dime novels he is allus readin' instead of doin' his work. Which one of them man-eatin' pirates of the Spanish Main was this here Christophe? I ain't never heard of him before."

"But, Captain, sir, Christophe was not a pirate. He was a Haitian king called Henri the First. He lived in a great stone castle on top of a mountain. In this citadel, which took many years to build, Christophe stored cannon, guns, powder and ball—all sorts of weapons against his day of need. Here he lived fiercely, administering his kingdom.

"He was quick to anger and cruel, a monster of murder, hurling his enemies from the ramparts of his castle. His lust for gold was greater, however, than even his lust for murder. He was always accumulating it—the gold of England, of France and of America. This he hid cunningly in a very secret place. And of those who built this secret place for him, or had knowledge of it, he slew one by one, either by his own hand or by the poisons of the witch doctors, called in Haiti, *papalois* if they be men or *mamalois* if they be women. So at last it came about that Christophe himself and one old witch doctor, the greatest *mamaloi* of them all, were the only ones left who knew.

"And neither of these trusted the other, for each of them kept a key to the place where the gold lay. And to open this place, both keys were needed. Then Christophe began to secretly plot against this old witch woman who had demanded one of the keys as her price for helping the king rid himself of his enemies. He dared not kill her openly. Her cult was strong, and she had bound the king to her by most fearful oaths and by the worship of the sacred snake from which came all Christophe's power.

"I mean," Slim corrected himself quickly, "Christophe—the snake had brought him good luck—made him king.

"THEREFORE, the king thought secretly to slay her. But the old *mamaloi* won as she had always. One night when Christophe was deep in his cups, eating and drinking with his officers, he rose up and swore that on the morrow he would drag the *mamaloi* from her cave and hurl her from the ramparts into the mile-deep ravine below. But even as he spoke he fell forward with a dreadful cry among the dishes, writhing in a fearful fit. Somehow, the old witch had caused to be mixed in his food or drink a deadly brew, for she could touch with ease the hidden springs of life. But the heart of Christophe was strong, so strong that this poison which would have wrenched away the life of another man, only killed the half of him. He lay paralyzed for two days. Then he rose from his bed, but not to walk, only to straddle along the wall like a sand-crab, never to walk again. Never to speak again, only mowling and mumbling like an ape—half of him dead, half of him alive, and suffering. And then in fury and despair he shot himself.

"But the *mamaloi* could not get at the gold. She possessed but one key. The other was wrenched from Christophe's dead breast by—by—my kinswoman, and so at last has descended to me. Therefore when we reach Haiti I would seek this gold, first seeking out the other key which I know is yet in the possession of the witch woman. And I would have you, and those of the ship's crew who are my friends, go with me if you are so minded."

It was a long speech. Slim had made it hurriedly with scarcely a pause for breath, fearful all the time of being interrupted by the mate or some one else requiring the captain's attention. And now he stood eyeing him wistfully. What would the captain say?

Captain Daugherty stared out at the tumbling billows of the Gulf of Mexico in a quandary how to answer. Ordinarily he would have dismissed the subject with a wave of his hand as—

"Old A.B. dope."

But there was an earnestness about Slim, an honesty in his dog-like brown eyes that made him hesitate. He did not want to hurt Slim by scouting him as a spinner of old sailor's yarns. Yet his tale had all the earmarks of the same old buried treasure narrative that was common water-front talk when the Ancient Mariner was a cabin boy.

"Slim, is this here a straight tale you've been tellin' me? No hearsay stuff? Do you honestly know where this here treasure is buried?"

"Captain, sir, I swear it," answered Slim fervently. "The gold is there for sure. It must be there. No one knows of its hiding place but myself and—one other."

"Who else knows about you goin' on this treasure hunt?"

"No one, my Captain. And none shall know until we reach Haiti but thyself. Then I shall tell Big 'Un and Joe whom I count as my friends, and you also, my Captain, if you will so honor me.

"If we find the gold, we will share it among ourselves. No one else need know. And if we do not find it or do not return—pauf!" Slim made an expressive gesture. "No one need know in that case either."

"What's making it dangerous, Slim?"

"That I can not so well explain, my Captain. I am not so well versed in English."

"Tut! Tut! You speak English lots better than what I do!" exclaimed the captain in an outburst of honesty. "Don't let English hold you back none."

"Well, Captain, for one thing, to reach the place where the treasure is hidden we must travel through a wild semi-barbarous country. We must ascend to Christophe's citadel which stands upon the top of a great mountain. It is said, too, that a spell has been cast upon the hiding place of the treasure, that sudden and speedy death comes to him who seeks it. Therefore it is my plan to—well, seek the aid of those who hold strange power over life and death. Who can, if they will, hold back this death-dealing power that is possessed by the ghost of Christophe who stalks among the ruins of this citadel and guards his gold in death as in life."

At these words the captain's gorge rose.

"Slim, don't expect me to take stock in them witch doin's an' haunt huntin'. It's all blamed bosh, Slim, an' if you are dependin' on one of them fake fortune-tellers or buried treasure hounds to locate money a dead nigger planted over a hundred years ago, count me out. I won't have no truck with heathen doin's, an' that's straight. If they know so well where it is at why don't they go git it themselves? No, they had rather charge you ten dollars to show you where ten thousand is hid. They are all fakes, Slim, all fakes."

Slim held up a soothing hand.

"Do not worry, my Captain. All I ask is that you partake of the adventure. As for the power of the voodoo, let that be established at the proper time. It is but fitting, certainly, that a white man and—a good Christian like yourself should doubt heathen rites and question their power over the dead."

Not one of Captain Daugherty's friends, nor members of his own family, even in their moments of wildest enthusiasm, had ever referred to him as a good Christian. Maybe, therefore, this descriptive title as used by Slim was a subtle flattery that won him over.

At any rate, Slim left the chart room with the captain's promise to go on the hunt for Christophe's hidden hoard.

"But, Slim, don't you dare let none of this get to the mate's ears. He'd think I had gone dotty for sure, an' he ain't any too respectful as it is."

In due time the *Maggie May* loafed into the spacious curving bay in front of Cap Haitien, and anchored close in shore. Captain Daugherty spent two busy days with the fruit company's agents before he could announce to Slim that he was ready for the treasure hunt.

It was no easy matter to get away from the *Maggie May* with Slim, Joe and Big 'Un in his wake for two or three days' mysterious visit into the interior, without drawing the mate's fire.

SHANNON was a chronic skeptic of the pessimistic variety, being also frank and outspoken.

"I don't see no reason why you should take my two best men an' the cabin boy too in this here wild-goose chase of yourn to Grand Rivière or Grand Creek air or whatever heathenish nigger name that town has got."

The captain, not having a logical reason ready, did not reply but went on making his preparations.

"An' that ain't all," continued the mate, encouraged by the captain's silence. "A captain of a fruit boat hadn't orter be gallivantin' around over every blessed island in the West Indies tryin' to locate coffee and sugar-cane land. You are settin' a bad example for fruit boats in general, an' it ain't right. Purty soon the fruit companies will be askin' the fruitboat crews to go ashore, raise the cane, cut it, refine the sugar, and bring it home. Or we will be raisin' bananas an' apples between trips. Why don't you leave all this here to the shoremen? They are a lazy lot as it is, an' this will make 'em worse. You've got a-plenty to do lookin' after the *Maggie May* instead of runnin' around on shore chasin' coffee beans."

"Mr. Shannon, sir," sputtered the captain as soon as he was able to speak, "air you the captain or air you the mate on this here boat?"

"I'm the mate, of course, but I thought a little friendly advice—"

"In the old days," continued the captain as if the mate had not spoken, "many a mate has been put in irons fer less jaw than you have just give me."

"I didn't mean no harm," said the mate a little contritely, "I just thought—"

"But nobody don't pay you to think, Mr. Shannon. You are paid, an' big wages too, I'll say, to run this here boat under captain's orders. I kin do all the thinkin' that's needed without your help. But just to ease your pain, I'll tell you that I'm takin' Slim along because he can talk this here lingo, an' you can't. It ain't Spanish," he added triumphantly, as he thought of the many times the mate had used his knowledge of Spanish to humiliate him. "An' Big 'Un goes because he can run the Ford, an' mend it, too, if it breaks down. An' Joe—"

"I don't give a darn about Joe," the mate interrupted, "take him or leave him."

"I'm takin' Joe," continued the captain sweetly, "just because I blame please. An' I'll take the rest of the crew if I want 'er. Now is that plain?"

The mate was too furious to reply, so he contented himself by staring across the town to the wooded mountains beyond and thinking what he could have said, had not discretion curbed him.

Through his glasses half an hour later, he saw the captain depart from the wharf in state in a Ford borrowed from the obliging marine officer on duty in Cap Haitien. Beside Big 'Un who was acting as chauffeur sat Slim to show the road. On the back seat were the captain and Joe.

"That old bird has got somethin' else up his sleeve besides tryin' to lease coffee and cane land for the company," the mate muttered. "He's as sly an' secret about this trip as a guinea-hen tryin' to steal a nest. I'll bet a year's wages he'll git into a jam that'll take a full corps of marines an' half the U. S. Navy to untangle him from. I never did trust that there Slim. He's too perlite an' oily. It ain't natural for no sailor man to be so. An' as for Joe an' Big 'Un, why a good sized Texas red ant could tote their brains ten mile an' never have to stop to wipe the sweat off his face. But I should worry. It ain't none of my funeral," and the mate put up his glasses and went below to his solitary breakfast.

After they were well out on the purple plain, Slim turned to Captain Daugherty and pointing toward the saw-toothed mountain outlined in the southern sky, said:

"Look, my Captain! See that high peak? It is well named 'The Bishop's Bonnet.' Well, the top of it is Christophe's citadel."

"Bosh! that ain't no fort," snorted the captain incredulously, staring at the mountain, "that's just the top of the mountain. You couldn't build no fort up there."

Slim smiled.

"All strangers say that, when they see it for the first time. Yet that is really the fort built by Christophe, over a hundred years ago."

"Say, Slim, how is it that you know so much about this nigger country?" asked the captain suspiciously. "You can talk their lingo an' appear to know all about 'em. I thought you was a Portygee."

Slim moved uneasily, and his dark face flushed.

"Many years ago, my Captain, when I was a boy I lived here for a time with my people. And the language one learns in his youth remains. Is it not so?" Then he went on quickly, "This treasure that we are seeking lies buried deep somewhere in that old citadel that cost so many lives, so much blood and tears to build.

"There is a Haitian saying that each stone represents a human life—every stone, every piece of iron, the great cannon, all were carried to the mountain top by the groaning subjects of Christophe, driven with whips and blows, but greater than the whips and blows was the dreadful fear of Christophe himself who, like death itself, lurked a dark shadow above them on the mountain, to command his fierce soldiers to swoop down on the workmen at any moment and slay those who idled at their task of moving the massive stones upward toward the great house he was building. It is said one day he came himself upon such a group that strained in vain at the great stone they were pushing upward. 'What is wrong?' asked the king.

" 'Oh King, we cannot move the stone, try as we will,' the slaves gasped.

" 'Stand out in line!' ordered the king. 'Shoot every fourth man,' he commanded his guard. 'Now,' he said to those who stood trembling, gazing at the dead men, 'you will, no doubt, find your strength renewed. On with the stone!' "

"And then what happened, Slim?" prompted Joe who had been listening open-mouthed.

"I have never heard," replied Slim dryly, "that one stone was missing when the citadel was completed. So without doubt the remaining workmen did have their strength increased, and succeeded in carrying the stone to its place.

"And now here we are at Grand Rivière. I will jump out and go forward to make arrangements for the night's lodging."

FROM Grand Rivière the treasure hunters set out next day at dawn. Ostensibly they were bound for the village of Milot at the outskirts of which were the ruins of Christophe's palace, Sans Souci. And above Sans Souci towered the mountain that had as its summit his citadel, La Ferrière.

However, as soon as they were well out of Grand Rivière, Slim left the main road, turning into a trail that was hard going, even for a Ford.

Finally they arrived at a small village far up in the hills, almost hidden in the jungle. You were hardly aware of its existence until an abrupt turn in the brush brought you suddenly upon it.

The Ford at once created a sensation in the village. The half-wild naked children ran screaming to their mothers, and then the entire population rushed out and surrounded it chattering in their half-French, half-African dialect that a profound knowledge of French will not help you to understand.

Suddenly Slim stood up in the car, waved his arms and swore at them in their own tongue, which is a very effective one for that purpose. Having by this means attracted their attention, he enjoined silence and proceeded to harangue the gaping crowd with pronounced effect.

During this speech, as he understood nothing that was said, Captain Daugherty sat quietly in the car. He did catch the word "papa" several times and wondered at it. He would have been more dumbfounded than was the mob of jostling awe-struck natives, if he had known what Slim was saying.

Slim was telling them that the dignified old white man—*blanc*—with the fierce look, who sat in the rear seat of the devil-wagon, was none other than the supreme Papa of all the United States Marines. According to Slim, the Marine Papa had journeyed to Haiti for the purpose of inspecting the old citadel of Christophe, with the idea of restoring it to its former glory. He would rest in their village until tomorrow and then go up to the citadel. During his absence the devil-wagon would be left in their village. If it chanced to be molested by any of the citizens while the Marine Papa was absent, he would know it.

Then the Marines would be instantly summoned, for the Marine Papa could call them at once over the wire, that all had seen strung on poles along the highway. The village would be burned and the inhabitants thereof hurled from Christophe's throwing-off place on the ramparts of the citadel, as was the playful custom of that mild monarch in the old days.

Perhaps they were curious to know about the giant of a black, sitting in the front seat of the devil-wagon. Well, he was none other than a cannibal king, imported directly from the river lands of Africa to serve as the personal bodyguard of the Marine Papa. Unfortunately, civilized food palled on the palate of this wild potentate. At times he turned away from all food and sighed for the flesh-pots of his native land. On these occasions he was uncontrollable.

That very morning he had reached out and grabbed up a fat child who had inadvertently strayed within reach of his great arms. Then, heedless of the cries of the little victim, he tore it limb from limb and ate it raw. Because of this unfortunate accident the Marine Papa had brought along the red-headed youth as emergency rations in case food became scarce. Nevertheless, the speaker hoped that none of the young children of the village would approach too near, because the cannibal king preferred dark meat to white, and you could never tell by looking at him just how hungry he might be.

With these few words of explanation and warning he would now ask the citizens of the village for a lodging for the night; also a shelter for the devil-wagon until such time as his master, the Marine Papa, finished his investigations in that commune.

Then Slim sat down. He was not cheered. The band did not play. Nor did any of the crowd of citizens show symptoms of being overcome by joy at the prospect of having these distinguished guests sojourn among them. They promptly moved back a considerable distance from the car, however, especially on Big 'Un's side. They then resumed their steadfast gaze. For over ten minutes no one spoke, and to remain speechless for ten minutes strains the constitution of the average Haitian to its very foundations.

After this long, awkward pause, a tall lean man, whose long Prince Albert coat, with gold braid on the sleeves, proclaimed him as a local celebrity, stepped forward, and with a flourish of his tall hat bent his back in a Chesterfieldian bow. He was of a light saddle tan in color, known in Haiti as a *gens de couleur*, if a man of means or physical prowess, but if poor financially and physically is called a *griffe* or mule nigger.

He introduced himself as the village schoolmaster, Ulysses St. Raisin by name, and begged the Marine Papa and his retinue to accept the hospitality of his poor house. He asked, however, that the cannibal king be requested to restrain his appetite until a savory young pig could be prepared for him. The pig would be much fatter, and therefore more nutritious, than either of the teacher's young sons. His sons' ribs could easily be counted at twenty paces, they were so lean. Then, too, as his family was of a mixed breed, their flesh would no doubt lack that "gamey" taste the king was accustomed to in his African feasts on "the goat without horns." As to the devil-wagon, it would be perfectly safe under a shed at his house. After what had been said no one in the village would come within touching distance of it.

After these negotiations had terminated satisfactorily, Slim informed the captain that he had arranged for lodgings at a satisfactory figure. They would abide in this hill village until morning, and then go after the treasure in earnest.

Captain Daugherty retired early and went promptly to sleep. During the night, tired as he was, he was awakened, vaguely disturbed by the muffled throbbing beat of tom-toms and the faint far-away sound of weird songs and wild howls.

PERHAPS his sleep would have been more disturbed if he had known that as soon as he had gone to bed, Slim, on the invitation of Ulysses St. Raisin, had induced Big 'Un and Joe to accompany him to the village sing-song held that night to placate evil spirits in general, and to secure their aid to increase the yield of their meager crops. With the native hill Haitian, a sing-song, combined with the native dance known as the Bamboula, takes precedence every time over careful cultivation of the soil as a crop stimulator. Why work all day in the hot sun, he argues, when an enjoyable dance in the cool of the evening with congenial companions does just as well as commercial fertilizer and elbow grease.

Slim smeared Joe's face and hands with walnut juice, giving him the regulation *griffe* color so that he would escape being taken for a *blanc*, white, at the dance. Big 'Un, who was blissfully ignorant of his rôle of cannibal king, was prevailed upon to carry a large Cocomcaque club as a sort of weapon of ceremony.

Slim then dressed himself in a frock-coat and a high hat, borrowed from Ulysses St. Raisin, who was similarly attired. Thus arrayed, the four of them set out for the scene of festivities. This was in a dense grove of trees beyond the town, where a stockade had been built around a large cleared space, whose dirt floor was well packed down by the dancing feet of a thousand such occasions.

Under the glare of the noonday sun or while in the company of *les blancs*, cultured negroes or *gens de couleur* the hill Haitian masquerades as a happy-go-lucky type of negro of the vintage of Uncle Tom of southern plantation days. But give him a full moon, a tropical forest, native rum, the company of his peers, together with the muttering roll of tom-toms, and he harks back to the river lands of Africa, mind and soul.

Soon after Ulysses St. Raisin had secured seats of honor for his guests, the dance began with the barking muttering roll of the tom-toms and the rhythmic clapping of hands. The local dancers of the village and surrounding country were put upon their mettle, so to speak, by the presence of a real imported cannibal king. Naturally he would be an authority on Bamboula and voodoo dancing, and therefore critical of their performance. Being thus challenged, the village dancers rose to the occasion and each and every spectator got an eyeful.

It was a dance that went down in the annals of the village to be talked about for years to come.

As the night wore on the dance grew wilder, the songs more weird, the jokes and sallies beyond the civilized pale. If Joe's mother in Galveston had even dreamed of his witnessing such orgies, she would have had a fit in her sleep.

Slim sat watching the dancers with a glassy-eyed stare, as they whirled, pranced, retreated and advanced with capering feet. Or, as with wild yells and screams they broke ranks and scampered away, only to reform and advance again with gestures, flexions, shimmies and contortions that are indescribable and would be censored if they were. And as he watched, Slim's face muscles began to twitch. He jerked his arms and snapped his fingers with an odd nervous movement, rhythmic with the steps of the dance. He joined in the songs.

As to Big 'Un, the muttering throb of the tom-toms stirred his blood, quickened his pulses and tightened his throat as nothing else had ever done. He did not know it, but his mind was harking back along the road that man has traveled from barbarism to civilization. It has been a long, long, weary road. Yet, on occasion the return journey can be made along a very short road, so short that one arrives back to barbarism before he is aware that the journey has begun. And the road back to the river lands of Africa is the shortest of them all.

Gradually Big 'Un felt himself slipping. His mouth was dry, his skin was wet with the perspiration of nervousness. He was hardly aware of it, but his body began to jerk and sway in perfect time with the tom-toms. He had to resist with all his strength the wild impulse to leap up with a yell and join the dancers, to give himself up wholly to this devil's music, the swaying rhythm of black bodies, and the scents of Africa.

Fortunately for Big 'Un's reputation, a free-for-all row occurred just at this juncture, among the ladies engaged in the dance. In jealousy-engendered rage they screamed, clinched, bit, scratched and tore at each other's wool until finally forcibly separated by mutual male friends. They were then hurriedly dragged away foaming at the mouth, hurling obscene epithets at each other, and the great Bamboula dance was over.

The three treasure hunters, together with their host, sneaked back to the latter's house just as the sun was rising over the jagged mountains. They brewed themselves some coffee and waited for St. Raisin's slatternly wife to prepare breakfast. Captain Daugherty soon joined them, and after they had eaten they sat out once more on the jungle trail, mounted on shaggy Haitian ponies this time, toward the mountain from whose crest frowned the cloud-hung citadel of Christophe. Slim lead the way along a narrow, muddy, vine-entangled path that was a wide well-kept road in Christophe's day.

Flanking the mountain on the right, they rode on slowly until noon. By that time, the captain, to whom a horse was a strange craft, had collapsed into that condition so graphically described as "saddle-weary." The saddle had galled him at all vulnerable points. His knees ached. His legs were sore and stiff, and his feet had gone to sleep. In addition, the sun had for hours poured down enthusiastically on the top of his head. But now, with the coming of the afternoon, it had settled down to steady work on the back of his neck, wasting in the effort enough heat calories to operate an eighty-ton blast furnace.

However, the captain shifted his weight in the saddle and rode grimly on. He would not say halt until the others did.

"Maybe this here is just a fake, after all," he muttered to himself, as he thought of the *Maggie May's* cool awning-protected, windswept deck. "An' it would serve me right if it is. Me, at my age, goin' off on a wild goose chase like this here. I had orter git sunstroke fer bein' such a fool."

AT LAST, Slim came to a halt in the shade of a caimite tree and waited for the others to join him.

"My Captain," he said, after the captain, stifling a groan, had eased himself off his pony and was rubbing his cramped legs and aching knees, "below us there, in a sort of cave, in that little ravine, dwells a great voodoo or witch doctor, *mamaloi*, as the Haitians call her. She is old, so very old that she claims to have known Christophe himself. And Christophe has been dead these hundred years."

Slim paused, drew a deep breath, looked at the captain furtively, and began again, hesitatingly: "Captain—I wish to say—to explain that in a white man's presence this *mamaloi* would be, what you say in English, not herself. She would be ill at ease, suspicious and afraid. Therefore she could not then be induced to properly practise her art. It is necessary, I deem it, that she lend us her aid in this treasure hunt. Therefore—"

"I thought you already knowed where this here treasure was at," interrupted the captain, "but now you say you need this here witch woman to help you. I—"

"Hold, my Captain!" Slim interrupted in his turn. "I do know just where is the hiding place of the gold. I can go to it at once. But the *mamaloi*—I would have her send her—her spirit to first spy out the secret place. To make assurance that the gold has not been disturbed in all these years that I have been away. I—I mean since I have first known of its hiding place," Slim corrected himself hastily. "But, before all, I would have her, by the power of her witchcraft, ward off the devils of the mountain that dwell in the old citadel. And in this way prevent the ill luck that follows after hidden gold. It is mainly for this that I would consult her."

"Bosh!" exploded the captain, "do you mean to tell me, Slim, that you believe in such mumble-jumble as that? Why that old nigger woman can't keep no bad luck off of us! As to finding that money, if she's all the help we have got to depend on, we might just as well go on back to the *Maggie May*. I had just as soon go anyway. I'm just about all in on this here treasure hunt. I was a blame fool to come in the first place. I'd trade my share right now for a long, tall glass of iced lemonade with a dash of rum in it."

"As I have said before, my Captain," Slim resumed soothingly, "I beg to be allowed to proceed in this matter as I have already carefully planned. If all of us cooperate I absolutely guarantee success. There shall be money for us all; lots of it. As to the power of this old *mamaloi*, I beg the captain to believe that I have the same faith and trust in her as you have in the faith taught to you by your mother.

"Therefore, as I started out to say, I am sure the *mamaloi* will refuse to perform the voodoo rites in the presence of a white man, and so—and so—" Slim was fumbling in the saddle-bags on his saddle—"and so I bought this masquerade in Cap Haitien so that you might easily disguise yourself."

Slim triumphantly held up to the captain's astonished gaze a woolly negro wig and a box of burnt cork grease.

"With the aid of these, my Captain, we can soon make you up into a real gentleman of color, or a *gens de couleur* as the Haitians say it. Disguised in this way, after the fashion of the cabin or Uncle Tom, as shown in the movies at Galveston, the *mamaloi* will never suspect that you are a white man."

"What!" sputtered the captain as soon as he realized that it was Slim's intention to disguise him as a negro. "Do you mean for me to put on them there minstrel show things? I'll be dingbusted if I do! Why, I would feel like a fool! What do you think I am?"

Slim wisely refrained from answering this question. Smiling diplomatically, he replied in a conciliatory tone:

"But, my Captain, reflect! You have the opportunity to see that which other white men have offered me—I—I—should say," he corrected himself hastily, "other white men who were curious have offered the *papalois* many dollars to be allowed to witness voodoo ceremonies. Invariably they have been tricked and have seen only an imitation, a very poor imitation of the real rites. You will see what no white man has ever seen before, because where I would take you no white man may go. Even this privilege is worth the trouble of disguising.

"And then again, where we go to seek this treasure a white man would not be safe. He would take his life in his hands. But disguised as an old—I mean," he stumbled back to safety, "I mean disguised as an important-looking, dignified gentleman of color, such as this disguise will cause you to impersonate, no one would doubt nor question you."

"What about Joe and yourself?" the captain questioned. "You two ain't niggers."

Slim smiled.

"No, perhaps not. Yet look! Neither

are we white. Last night Big'Un and myself stained Joe's face, neck, hands and arms with walnut juice. So today Joe is partly colored, what the Haitians call a *griffe*. He will easily pass as such. And I? Certain it is that God gave me a dark skin; dark enough to allow me the freedom of the treasure road. To which I add also the advantage of speaking the Haitian tongue."

Again Slim's patient persuasive way prevailed. In half an hour a dignified portly imitation of an end man in an Elks' minstrel show stumped stolidly along the trail behind Big 'Un whose broad proportions prevented the erstwhile captain of the *Maggie May* from seeing Joe who was prancing along the road ahead in convulsive contortions of suppressed laughter at the transfiguration of his superior officer.

AFTER Slim had concealed the ponies in the brush he led the way down the water-rutted path into the ravine. As he picked his way cautiously among the stones he was continuously looking about him, as if he fully expected the long departed Christophe to show up in person. After a time he found a tall tree that had several long-necked dried gourds hanging from its topmost branches. There was a hole in the round body of each gourd from which, as Slim watched, swallows darted away with their peculiar skimming flight.

"Jest look at dat!" exclaimed Big 'Un. "Look at dem martin gourds! I ain't seen none of dem since I was a boy. Mus' be somebody livin' close by, ifen dey kin live in all dis brush. Seems like even dem martins would git lost lookin' fer grub in dis here jungle."

"You are right, Big 'Un," Slim answered. "Those birds are the pets of the old *mamaloi*, and they have gone to warn her that we are near. Just below there," and Slim pointed down the path which seemed to end in a network of jungle against the mountain's base, "is her dwelling place. I must go there first alone, my friends. Be good enough to remain here beneath this tree until I return."

"Suits me fine," agreed Big'Un heartily. "I ain't lost no hoodoo witch woman my own self, and I ain't huntin' none. Go ahead, but watch your step, Slim. Don't let her put no conjur charm on you."

Slim did not reply, but stepping out from the others, he stood perfectly erect, cupped his hands about his mouth and gave a weird, peculiar, long-drawn-out cry. When the echoes of the cry had died away there came suddenly the muttering, throbbing roll of the tom-tom. For a few moments its strange sinister drone was all about and around them. Then it ceased as suddenly as it began.

'Ah!" exclaimed Slim. "Madame is at home and will receive me. Adieu, my friends, for a little time," and he was gone down the vine-entangled path.

"Cap'n," Big 'Un asked as soon as Slim had disappeared, "what does you think of all dis doin's? Seems to me, ifen we does find dat money, it will be haunted, or have some sort of conjur spell on it. What does you think? An' sides dat, I ain't never seen no shore enough hoodoo woman an' I don't know as I wants to see one. How 'bout you, Joe?

"I'm just dyin' to see her, Big' Un. I have read a lot about 'em. And just think! Now I am going to see a sure enough witch woman, just like they are in Africa! There aint nothing to be afraid of, is there, Captain?

The captain was too hot and too tired to talk, so he struck viciously at the joyous gang of gnats and mosquitoes circling about his head and snapped out:

"All I'm afraid of is these blamed bugs that has got bills like automatic drills, an' I ain't goin' to ride or walk much farther to see no witch woman or any other kind of woman; not even to see the Queen of Shebey dance the shimmie. So now you two let me alone. I want to rest."

And with another swing at the circling man-eaters he settled himself more comfortably against the tree. In this way he spent an hour, dozing and sweating, listening half unconsciously to Joe and Big 'Un trying to frighten each other with bloodcurdling tales of "ants," witches and ghosts, until Slim returned.

They then ate the lunch they had brought, drank from a small spring that trickled away in the tall guinea grass, filled their canteens and started on the trail again just as the sun was going down.

Big 'Un soon noticed that on the branches of the trees along the path were hung rude wooden dolls that were swinging back and forth in the freshening evening breeze.

By virtue of inherited instinct he was

fairly certain of the significance of these dolls, but he wanted to confirm his suspicions.

"Slim," he asked, "what is dem things hangin' on dem trees?"

Slim turned and regarded Big 'Un with a curiously knowing smile.

"Why these be the death dolls of the *mamaloi*. They have been hung here according to her instructions by those who would rid themselves of enemies; or of a husband or a wife of whom they have grown tired."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Big 'Un. "Kin dat hoodoo woman kill off folks dat way? Just by hangin' dem dolls in de trees? I has heard tell of sich doin's, but I aint never seen it before. How does dem dolls do de work?"

Big 'Un continued to eye the little dolls fearfully while Slim, who was in a hurry to be gone, explained briefly.

"The little doll is made by the *mamaloi*, named for the one marked for death, and the death spell cast upon it. Then the doll is hung in the tree with a string made from the dried gut of a bat. When the string rots and the death doll falls, death comes to him for whom the doll is named, and it comes swiftly, suddenly as the doll falls."

"An—an—Slim, does you believe in dat—dat hoodoo trick your ownself?" Big 'Un asked, lowering his voice and with a cautious eye on Captain Daugherty and Joe, who had walked on ahead.

Slim glanced at the captain also, and lowered his own voice as he replied:

"Most assuredly I believe that the *mamaloi* has this power! I know of—of—many things. Believe me, these *mamalois* and *papalois* are kings of voodoo, and are deeply learned in the age old witchcraft of Africa. With their medicines and charms they can touch the hidden springs of life. They are the overlords of death and devils, be it conjuring, or voodoo, hoodoo—call it what you will.

"The white people," he continued fiercely, "they do not believe. They jeer and scoff. And yet I have seen even them—" He paused abruptly. "But I—we—you and I—we know!" He made a gesture of finality. "Why speak to you of these matters, my friend? Africa runs riot in your veins. It is in the marrow of your bones. No matter where you came into the world you drank it in with your mother's milk, this old faith, these old beliefs. They are a part of you. May be a hidden part, but a part nevertheless."

Big 'Un looked at Slim, and Slim, the Portygee, the man whom he had never fully understood, was gone. In the other's stead was Slim, the Mulatto, the half breed. A kindred soul whom he knew as he knew himself. There was no longer need of speech between them. The dusk of evening had shrouded the little ravine in darkness before they had waded through the jungle and reached the stockade enclosing the hut of the *mamaloi* at the base of the mountain.

THE stockade was covered by a mass of creeping vines and briars, which very effectively prevented any one on the outside from spying on those within. Nor could the stockade be scaled, because of a bristling hedge of villainous bayoneted passion-thorns. The dull glow of a fire could be seen over the stockade but not a sight nor sound of life.

Slim stepped up to the gate of the stockade and knocked upon it. A parrot screamed, and a thin querulous voice called in the creole patois of the hills:

"Who comes? Who comes?"

"It is I, mama. Louis Gespart, who spoke and bargained with thee but an hour agone."

"And those others of whom you spoke?"

"They are here, mama."

"Three men, you said. Yet my snake tells me one of them is but a boy, perhaps a *blanc*. Didst thou lie to me?"

"Perhaps a boy in size and years, mama, but with the heart of a man. And his skin is even as mine. The others are as black as the great cat that lies at thy feet."

"Enter then," and the gate opened softly, seemingly of its own volition.

Inside, at the farthest end of the stockade was a toadstool-shaped hut built against the mountain side. There was a narrow well trodden path leading from the gate to the hut. Slim led the way until the four of them stood under the hut before a sort of high broad chair or great stool with arms made of black wood hideously carved with snakes and reptiles. At the back, on top of knobs at opposite corners, were two small female images. One with a nursing child at her breast, the other with a snake being nourished at hers.

Within the cavity made by the arms

and back of the stool was an old, old black woman, sitting toadlike among the heaped up fur pelts of many animals. She was small-faced, wrinkled, toothless, with round, staring protruding eyes. Her toothless jaws moved with a constant tremulous chewing movement and between the bluish lips that formed her slit of a mouth, she thrust a thick, furred, elongated tongue at rhythmic intervals, as a serpent thrusts his tongue in and out of his mouth.

Behind her great stool, above her head on swinging perches, roosted two small round-eyed owls, of the kind usually described as screech owls. Beside her lay a great black cat who lifted his head and looked at them out of cynical yellow eyes.

Slim stopped in front of the half couch, half stool, held up his hand in a sort of salute and said—

"I am here, mama, and those others with me."

The old woman, while seemingly staring into space, had all the time been watching them approach, now held up a shriveled paw and with a trembling finger counted.

"One, two, three and thyself, four," she quavered. "And these other three; are they, too, of the ancient faith? Have they drank of the blood of sacrifice and been kissed by the sacred snake?"

"Mama, they have," replied Slim promptly, secure in the knowledge that none of his friends understood a word of the Haitian dialect, and he saw no reason therefore for stinting his lying.

In the meantime, Captain Daugherty blissfully unaware that he had just been classified as a *de luxe* snake worshiper and devotee of the ancient faith of the river lands of Africa, had found a place to sit down, and was tenderly rubbing his aching legs and wondering how tired a man must become before fatigue would kill him. As he rubbed he looked about him curiously. However, not being endowed with a vivid imagination, he was very little impressed by what he saw. He saw the old witch in the chair, with the cat beside her; the little owls on the perches. And that was all. But the faint, sour, all-pervading stench of the place offended his nostrils; the acrid smoke from the wood fire made his eyes water, and the mosquitoes and sand flies bit him viciously. Even through the burnt cork grease paint, these left him no leisure to be thrilled by the African atmosphere about him, if he had been so inclined.

As for Big 'Un, one glance about the hut and a fearful furtive look at the old voodoo woman had been enough to stir the blood of his ancestors in his veins, and to awaken ancient dreads to make him afraid. Hidden fears that had come to him as an inheritance, of whose existence he had never even been aware until now. He did not understand the language spoken, but the little screech owls—Big 'Un called them "hant owls—" the great yellow-eyed black cat, the small grotesque images, the "conjur hoops," and voodoo charms hanging from various parts of the hut—these spoke to him in a tongue that he knew, of things that he feared.

Joe was not missing a single detail. He was completely, if somewhat fearfully happy. Fearful, that having only two eyes, he might miss something. Galloping through his brain was a troop of remembered heroes from all the adventure tales that he had ever read. And it seemed to him that his own experiences in the last forty-eight hours were comparing favorably with some of the adventures of these gallants, and from the present outlook bid fair to outclass some of them.

If Providence would only spare his life until he could return to Galveston and attend a Boy Scout camp fire! He could tell a tale that would make their hair curl!

The old voodoo *mamaloi* stirred among her evil-smelling furs, got herself more erect, and said:

"But the sacred sign, thou seeker after sacred things that belong to the dead. Show me the sacred sign! It is not lawful, even for the keeper of the sacred snake to speak of things which the dead have hidden, and over which the devils of the ground keep watch and ward, unless that which is spoken is heard by ears lawful to hear. Show me the sacred sign!"

Slim pulled off his coat, stepped inside the dim light from the fire, opened his shirt, and pointed to his breast.

"Come nearer. Lean over that I may see. My eyes are dim. I am old, old."

He leaned forward with a half smile on his face. The old woman peered at his chest long and earnestly, muttering to herself. She turned, picked up a small gourd from among several beside her, and shook a powder from it on to the fire. Instantly the fire leaped up into a white glare and in its light she saw on Slim's left breast a small goat, tattooed in black with gilt horns. Over the goat's head was tattooed a gilt crown.

"BY ALL the earth devils!" shrieked the *mamaloi*. "Christophe! Christophe! Thou art bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh! It is his sign! It is his sign!"

As she looked wildly about her she chanced to see Big 'Un, just out of the circle of light from the fire, an interested but uncomprehending spectator. She stared fixedly at him, and then pointed with a trembling hand.

"Look! look!" she fairly yelled. "Christophe himself! He has come back! He has overcome the seven devils that were set to guard his grave! He has overcome! He has returned! As he swore he would! As he swore he would! Welcome, King! Welcome home! Welcome—" And then with a gurgling croak she fell back, writhing and slobbering in a fit.

Two other women, unseen until now, darted out of the pool of darkness behind the great chair, which was really the mouth of a cave and seized the *mamaloi* to prevent her from falling out of the chair into the fire. They wiped the foam from her lips, poured some liquid from a gourd down her throat, waved some burning feathers before her nose and patted her convulsed grimacing face with swift, soft rhythmic strokes.

Under the influence of these restoratives the *mamaloi* soon sat up, shivered, hiccoughed and spat with an explosive sound.

"My snake tells me," she began thickly but calmly, as if she had not just thrown a fit that would have turned a dummy-chucker green with envy, "my snake tells me that you are of the royal house of Christophe. Yet how comes it? You are colored, not black, and your face is as the faces of the *griffs*, rather than as was the face of thy great black ancestor. But he—ha! He who stands yonder in the shadow—the great black man—not the fat one sitting down—he has the face and the form of Christophe himself. Has he the sacred goat above his heart also? Is this man Christophe, the king, returned from the shadows, as he swore he would to make the land fat and strong again? Why does he not speak? Or is it that those who return from the shadows are dumb? Speak, King! It has been many, many days since I heard thy voice. I am old, old!"

"That may well be, mama," answered Slim dryly, "for Christophe has been dead these hundred years. I am of the house of Christophe, but a great grandson of that Spanish woman lured to Sans Souci by Christophe. Was it she, mama, who really killed him at last and not his own hand as was reported? My mother was the wife of a French Chargé d'Affaires who grossly abandoned her and returned to France. Before she died I had from her the knowledge of that which I seek to right through you. And the man yonder who recalls Christophe to you is a relative of mine from Jamaica and speaks not our language."

"And the old fat one?"

"He is my uncle, also from Jamaica," and Slim glanced at Captain Daugherty who had removed his shoes and was carefully caressing his stocking feet, fortunately ignorant of the ties of consanguinity Slim was fastening on him.

"And the small one," suspiciously, "who truly looks a blanc. Who is he?"

"My nephew, mama. My mother's sister's son. He, too, is from Jamaica, and does not speak the Haitian language."

"Now then," began the *mamaloi* practically, her suspicions somewhat allayed, "what shall be my recompense if I spy out this hidden gold for thee and subdue the wrath of the devils of the ground who keep watch and ward over it? Set to their task of watching by the *mamalois* of old, who served Christophe. It is no trifle, young man, to contend with the devils of the ground, and to wrest from their clutches the gold they have been set to guard. He! He!" she snickered, "It takes gold to seek out gold! He! He! Gold can only be caught with gold."

And she held out her loathsome paws, cupping them suggestively, and leered obscenely up at Slim.

In reply Slim pulled out his wallet, counted out three U. S. twenty-dollar gold pieces, and dropped them in the *mamaloi's* outstretched hands.

"These for thee, mama, and thy fair share of the treasure, if the earth devils disgorge it."

The old *mamaloi* fingered the gold pieces lovingly.

"Gold, gold, gold," she crooned. "Gold

is the goblin of power, as mighty as the devils of the mountains that growl and shake the earth with their mighty arms when the earthquake comes. Gold means food. Gold means power. This the white man knows, for he seeks it always. Yet I, a black woman, I know more than they. He! He! I know that if gold be made to run free in the medicine cup, as water runs, it will put new life in the old man, and it will make young again the withered breasts of such as I. It can be done. I know the way. He! He! I know. I know. I am old, old."

Slim waited patiently for the *mamaloi's* miserly ecstasy to subside. And when she had sunk back among her furs again, mumbling and grimacing like an old ape that was hungry and cold, he reached in the bosom of his shirt and pulled out a small black ball of teakwood, carved on both sides into a hideous leering face.

"I have here, mama, a ball. It has been handed down in my family from the days of Christophe. Somewhere there is another ball just like this one. I was told that the *mamaloi*, who dwells in power in a hut that is built in the mouth of a cave at the foot of the great devil mountain upon whose top sits the citadel of Christophe would have this other ball. This is the hut so described," concluded Slim in his precise way, "and thou, the ancient one art, without doubt, the *mamaloi* who sits in power."

"I am indeed she who sits in power," the *mamaloi* modestly admitted. "And the two balls, what of them?"

"It is only with the two balls used together that the gold of Christophe can be got at," Slim answered. "It is from thee, mama, I must obtain the other ball."

The old *mamaloi* permitted herself a shrill cackle, clapping her hands together softly, as she shook her head and leered up at Slim from her nest of furs.

"This ball that has this power over the gold of Christophe was given to me with the curse of all the devils of the mountain upon it. And to make our snake stand up beside us to protect us from this curse requires a sacrifice. And that sacrifice—"

"Must be a goat," interrupted Slim. "A he-goat with gilt horns."

"And that goat," the old mama continued with her specifications, "must be bought with gold; three more of the coins such as thou hast already given."

"All the gold I possess I have already given thee, mama."

"But that gold was for myself, my love, not for the goat. And it is necessary that a goat be sacrificed. Otherwise my snake will not stand up beside thee." The *mamaloi* sighed pensively. "La, la. How much better would be a goat without horns! Long, long it has been since I tasted such flesh!" She smacked her lips reminiscently. "Such flesh would warm my blood and quicken my heart. With such tender flesh to eat and young warm blood to drink I could see far, far into the bowels of the mountain where lies hidden in its secret place the gold of Christophe. I could—is it not possible, my love, to procure for me, thy mama, a goat without horns?" she wheedled. "With gold one can be bought or stolen, it matters not which, by one of my *loup-garous*. My stomach—all of me—begs for this tender flesh. I am old, old."

Then she roused herself up suddenly with a sort of chattering scream.

"But no! Since the accursed American blancs came in from the sea—where were my people that they did not stop them and run them back into the sea, as they did the English and the French? Nothing is as it once was. Those of us who serve the sacred snake must be content with common flesh. Even the great One himself— Hark to him hiss!" She tapped upon the seat of the great chair, and a noisy hissing responded to the knock. "Even he, the sacred snake, must be content with the livers of common young goats and chickens. Evil days! Evil days!"

The hissing continued, so she tapped softly three times on the stool and said:

"Hush! Darling of my heart! Great One! Sublime One! Hush, and rest! Sleep! Sleep! Mama will feed thee presently. Good liver, maybe the soft tender liver of a goat without horns, or else thou shall be fed warm milk, milk from a young woman's breasts." She leaned forward and whispered to Slim, "Hist! I must lie, even to him, as thou seest. For the cursed Americans guard the children even as their own, and— You see, do you not, my love?" changing the subject quickly, as if she feared she had let her tongue wag too freely, "how cozily the wise one sleeps in his nice warm box under my chair? Here I sit on top of it both day and night, to guard and hover him as a hen guards and hovers her young brood.

"Thus was he guarded by the *mamalois* who came before me, in that far away time when he first came to us from Africa. Then he was only a tiny baby snake, stolen from the sacred nest of his mother, and brought thither to bless us, by a *mamaloi* of the olden time who kept him safe and warm beneath her breasts when she crossed the cold, cold sea. And now," she coaxed softly, holding out her apelike paws again, "how much more gold for the sacred meat of sacrifice?"

"But, mama," Slim protested, "I have given all the gold I have. I swear it upon the sacred snake himself;" he reached out and touched the little snake image that dangled from her scrawny neck. "Remains then thy fair share of what the two balls will deliver up to us."

Thus they haggled and bargained until the great golden moon had climbed into the sky above the mountain and made the little ravine a place of glory.

Captain Daugherty, completely exhausted, had fallen asleep on the pile of straw on which he was sitting, and was gently snoring—an unconscious but toothsome prey for the mosquitoes and sand flies.

Big'Un, watchful and wide awake, could not have been put to sleep with chloroform. The river land of Africa was at his elbow, Galveston and civilization as far away as Mars. The great black cat lay gazing at him watchfully, ceaselessly, with its inscrutable yellow eyes. Eyes that to Big'Un's half hypnotized senses seemed to be two great yellow pools, containing all the evil in the world. Had the old witch doctor cast a spell on him, when she had started up suddenly, pointed at him, shrieked out and fell over in a fit? And then that hissing beneath the *mamaloi's* chair! It had chilled his blood with a nameless dread. And that image of a snake about her neck which Slim had touched so reverently. He had never seen its like before, yet he felt that it represented a thing of evil, a great dread, that had both repelled and attracted him all his life.

Joe was in the throes of an insatiable, compelling curiosity. It oozed from every pore and had driven out all fear; except the fear that he might nod or doze a little and miss something. He was, therefore, thoroughly on the job when the two women, who had assisted the *mamaloi* when she threw her fit, brought out two large watermelons, and a cask of native rum, in which was a dipper made from a coconut shell.

Then one of the ladies-in-waiting went into the cave behind the *mamaloi's* chair, and after a few minutes returned, accompanied by two of the most villainous looking old negro men Joe had ever seen. Without speaking a word, they squatted down on one side of the little fire, each with a tom-tom between his knees. The watermelons were cut and the pieces placed on tin plates. Then Slim, Joe and Big'Un were told to take their places in the circle about the fire. Captain Daugherty was allowed to slumber on.

The cask of rum was passed, each drinking in his turn from the coconut dipper. The melons were then eaten, and the rum passed again.

"Joe," warned Slim in English, "do not drink again of the rum. You are but a boy, and it is very strong." But to Big'Un he said, "Drink hearty, my friend! It will warm thy heart. Later we will awaken the captain, and give him some. But at present it is better that he should sleep."

"COME hither, my love," called the old *mamaloi* who, now having driven the best bargain possible, was inclined to be hospitable and kind. "Come hither and bring with thee thy big kinsman who to me is Christophe returned. I am minded to give thee both wangas—charms. See!" and the ancient iniquity held up two little bags of fur attached to flaxen strings. "These be made from a black cat's fur. In each of them is a pinch of grave dust that has been moistened with the blood of a pig-eating sow. And three feathers from a crowing hen tied together with the raveling from a shroud. Throw the strings over thy left shoulder, so that the little bag will be under the right arm pit, next to the skin so that all the strength from the bag will go into thy body. Wear it always, for worn in this fashion, disaster, disease and death will stand a long way off. And good fortune will abide with thee, until I, thy mama, shall will it otherwise." She handed Slim the little bags. "Tell the big one the words I have said to thee. And now sit you down again at the fire. I will call upon the wise one, so that he may show me the way to the gold of Christophe, and how to ward off from thee the evils of the dark. I will also make strong my medicine to weaken the power of the devils of the mountain, that sometimes I hear in my cave, growling far away in the bowels of the earth."

Slim gave Big'Un his charm bag and explained its potency as they resumed their places at the fire where the rum was still in action, and two more watermelons had been cut.

After all had eaten and drunk, the *mamaloi* said:

"Come, my loves, these men must be on their way before the seven stars ride high in the sky and my sacred roosters crow for midnight." She lifted in her hand the small rod of black wood with two snakes carved upon it. "Sing my sisters! Sing! Sing the song of Obeah!"

The tom-toms, thrummed by the two old men, began to beat. And with the high thin voice of the old *mamaloi* leading, the song of Obeah began. This is a sort of sing-song prayer, or hymn of praise to that mysterious evil-god, the sullen devil-god, the unexplainable, never fully comprehended thing of dread and terror that stalks in the dark gloomy background of voodooism. It is a never loved but always feared deity whose living emblem is the sacred spotted snake of Haiti or the equally sacred green snake of Africa.

The *mamaloi* would intone two lines in the form of questions, extolling the might and virtue of Obeah. Then the two women would shout in reply the obvious name of Obeah.

"Who blesses fields of maize and cane,
And sends the sunshine and the rain?"

"Obeah! Obeah!"

"Who rides upon the rolling cloud,
And smites with lightning flash and thunder loud?"

"Obeah! Obeah!"

"Who rules the devils down in hell,
And can make thee sick or make thee well?"

"Obeah! Obeah!"

"Who guards from harm, or slays thy foes;
Who brings thee joy, or sends thee woes?"

"Obeah! Obeah!"

As the song went on there came, blending in with its cadence, the thin quavering cry of the little screech owls who were perched above the *mamaloi's* chair. It was a gruesome chorus; the plaintive voices of the women, the droning throbbing roll of the tom-toms, the ghostly, gibbering tremolo of the little owls. This spectral medley would have caused the most valiant ghost-scoffer to shiver; and Big'Un was neither valiant nor a scoffer.

Without being aware of it he began to move a little at a time, nearer and nearer to the fire. After a time as the song went endlessly on and on, a mesmeric spell seemed to seize him. Gradually his body began to twitch and sway in unison with the muffled mutter of the tom-toms. Then, unaware, he began humming the tune of the song the women were singing. He could not sing the words of the song, but soon he was singing an unintelligible gibberish, shouting the response of "Obeah! Obeah!" and keeping time by clapping his hands.

Gradually the group sitting about the fire worked themselves up into a frenzy; their bodies swaying and sweating, their hands clapping, and eyes rolling in the full swing and verve of the song. Then, as if she had carefully timed her appearance for this opportune moment, a young woman leaped out of the cave's mouth behind the *mamaloi's* great chair. She was dressed in white with the regulation *mamaloi* red sash wound about her lean hips. In her hands held high above her head was a beautiful cock, a red game, of Spanish breed. She ran to the hard trodden open space beyond the fire and gestured to the old *mamaloi.*

Then, with the cock clasped to her breast, she began to dance. Around and around she went with mincing steps, to the quickened throb of the tom-toms. With marvelous contortions and a lithe grace that would have turned a civilized interpretive dancer green with envy she advanced and retreated, now fast, now slow, in obedience to the abrupt changing time of the tom-toms.

As she danced, she advanced, first towards the old *mamaloi* and then toward each of the others, holding out the cock and withdrawing, leaping away, whirling the poor rooster, struggling with impotent wings, about her head. Returning she would hold him clasped lovingly to her breast, bending her head down and whispering to him. Never once did she lose step with the tom-toms as the chanting rose and fell, praising the prowess and personal charms of the great Obeah.

On and on she danced until foam came out on her lips and her frenzy distorted face quivered and jerked. The howling delirium of her face fascinated Big'Un, and held his eyes as in a vise. But the dancer did not see him, nor the others. With rapt round-eyed gaze she stared out and beyond the toadstool hut to some fixed point in the star-strewn sky. As the song rose and fell, she danced up to each of them and seemingly without seeing, she laid the cock for a moment upon their heads, first going to the old *mamaloi* and then to the others.

Suddenly, with a wild shriek, the song stopped. The dancer's hand that held the cock shot out. Round and round she spun him, holding him by the head. As with this deft, swift movement she wrung his neck, one of the other women leaped up and caught the hurtling body before it fell. In her hands was a small round bowl in which she caught the blood and handed it to the *mamaloi*. This old witch walled her eyes up, muttered a charm, and eagerly drained the bowl.

While the *mamaloi* drank, she who had danced took a small knife from her sash and disemboweled the dead cock. The liver she put on a small platter beside the *mamaloi's* chair.

All being then complete, that ancient evil was assisted down from her seat. She squatted on her lean haunches and began to tap rhythmically on the box beneath her chair. As she tapped she crooned, while one of the women thrummed a tiny tom-tom, soft and low, a slow cadenced beat, timed to the old *mamaloi's* crooning.

"Come, wise one! Come great one! Come! Mama would caress thee! Mama would feed thee! Here is the liver of the red cock, the fierce cock. Eat to make thy heart glad! Eat to make thy medicine strong. Keen must be thy eyes to spy out the path to the secret place of the dead! Make strong thy medicine, mighty one! We pray thee, leash the devils of the mountain that they harm us not! We pray thee! Cover the eyes of the ghosts that they see us not!"

Over and over she crooned these words, while the tom-tom beat on and on in unison; a soft muffled barking roll. On and on went this devil's music until at last an evil flat head showed itself at the latticed hole in the box; swaying with the music, darting out its forked tongue.

"Oho! Oho!" cried the women at the sight of the snake's head, softly clapping their hands and swaying their bodies. "Oho! Oho!"

And the old *mamaloi* held out her arms ecstatically. Slowly, with graceful swaying leisure, the snake emerged from the box to be received into the arms of the *mamaloi* and hugged lovingly to her lean breast. Still crooning her witch's lullaby, she couched her squirming godling in her lap and reached out her hand for the still warm liver of the sacrificed cock.

Joe, who from his place before the fire was gazing with all his eyes, suddenly felt his arm gripped until it hurt. He turned to see Big'Un, with the sweat pouring down his terror convulsed face.

"Joe," he gasped, "does you see dat snake? Does you?"

"Aw, the snake ain't goin' to hurt us," Joe whispered. "Look at him, Big'Un. Gobblin' down that liver!"

All that Joe saw was a pet snake, in an old negro woman's lap, eating chicken liver. He knew nothing of the nameless something beaten into Big'Un's brain by the tom-toms. This thrumming of old witch measures with the marvelous syncopations brought out by skillful manipulation of the drums spoke a veritable language to his African ears. The tom-toms awoke in him the faith and the fears of his forefathers. Witchcraft clutched at his heart, turned his blood to ice water; loosened his knees.

The snake that was just a snake to Joe became to him as a god. He felt impelled to kneel while the snake was swallowing the chicken liver, and hold out imploring hands to this pied pet of voodoo, the same as Slim and the Haitians were doing. Big'Un's proud boast that "I comes from shoutin' Methodist folks" was forgotten for the nonce; Galveston was far away and long ago.

THE throbbing of the tom-toms ceased at last, and the voodoo vassals returned the living symbol of their deity to his soft cotton-lined box.

"Now," the *mamaloi* remarked placidly after being reseated on her great chair, "the Great One will stand beside us when we throw the bones that speak."

One of the women placed before her a small frame, upon which the hide of a black cat was stretched, one side with the fur still upon it. The old woman produced a greasy little bag from her all holding chair, and poured out upon the cat's hide the six small bones inside.

"My goodness!" muttered Big'Un. "I knows what dem is! Conjur bones! Ifen I ever gits back home alive I will shorely be one happy boy!"

"These be the bones of little babies' feet," the *mamaloi* explained, "that never walked on earth. Therefore we can send them to run on hidden paths, to spy out secret ways. Even down the ways of what is to be they may go, and returning tell us what snares are set upon the path of tomorrow. That is, if our medicine be strong enough."

She gathered up the little bones in her two hands, shook them vigorously muttering and mouthing to herself, then threw them upon the little frame. She leaned forward and studied the bones for a little time, gathered them up and threw them again, repeating the same performance three times, studying the bones intently.

"All is well," she announced at last. "The gold of the dead king remains in the secret place where it was first hidden."

She fumbled again in her bag, producing the duplicate of Slim's little black ball which she handed to him.

"Go now with haste, for the night wanes, leaving me here to cast charms upon the devils of the mountains and the ghosts of the dead, that they harm thee not. This is not lawful for thee to see. Go, and the drums will go before thee, telling those who should know of thy coming, so that they may make the way clear, and lure away, until the dawn comes, those who guard the citadel. Where the path turns up the mountain-side there you will find two *papalois* waiting. And then—"

"The rest I know, mama," interrupted Slim who, now that he possessed the ball, was in a hurry to be gone. So, with a fond farewell on the part of the *mamaloi*, they woke up Captain Daugherty, refreshed him with several dipperfuls of the rum, and once more began their stumbling scramble down the muddy rock strewn path into the thick jungle of the ravine. Above them the mountain towered menacingly in the moonlight, upon its highest peak the citadel of Christophe.

"Yonder, my Captain," Slim pointed upward, "is the great treasure chest of Christophe. Somewhere in the bowels of that old fort is hidden a chest of gold. Gold for thee, gold for me; gold for all of us!" Slim's dark eyes gleamed, his voice trembled with eagerness. "All my life long, since I was a little boy, I have dreamed of this time, this night, when I should proceed down this very path, and then up that mountain to seek my inheritance—my—this treasure," he corrected himself hastily.

Slim might just as well have spared himself the correction. Captain Daugherty's entire mind was concentrated with painful intensity upon his burning feet, his chafed heels that were beginning to blister, and the aching protests of his surprized leg muscles, trained from boyhood to bridge and deck work, the opposite of mountain climbing. The captain had just opened his mouth to make as bitter and sarcastic a comment on Haiti in general and her roads in particular, as his energy would permit, when suddenly from somewhere came the muffled mutter of tom-toms. It was all about them, overhead, far away, near at hand; the exact spot from which the sound comes can never be located. The sound ceased abruptly, and later began again.

"Ah!" exclaimed Slim. "It is as mama said. She sends word on ahead by the drums of our coming."

The captain stopped his slipping, sliding descent of the muddy vine tangled path and mopped his sweating face with an already wet handkerchief.

"Them thumpin', stutterin' drums don't tell me a thing! What I want to know is, how much farther is it? How much more slippin' and slidin', climbin' an' crawlin' is it goin' to take to get to where this here treasure is at? I'm just about beat an' I don't mind sayin' so. If it's much farther I'm goin' to call it a day an' bunk at the next house I see if I ever see another one. I have already walked a thousand dollars' worth of my share as it is. An' it will cost half of that to git my feet in shipshape agin. An' talkin' of shipshape reminds me, how far is it to the sea?"

Slim was too diplomatic to reply. A quick glance showed him dissatisfaction on the faces of Joe and Big'Un also. To argue and explain would only make a bad matter worse. It was the time to act. He stepped down the path a few paces, cupped his hands about his mouth and gave a peculiar, weird, wavering cry—the cry of a caco bird. Almost instantly came again the deadened sullen bark of the tom-tom. It ceased abruptly and from a short distance down the ravine came the answering cry of the caco bird.

"That cry is from our guides," explained Slim. "They are waiting but a short distance down the path. Courage, my friends! The way is not long. We soon shall have arrived."

With these words to cheer them on they went forward, and after another ten minutes struggle with vines, bamboo briars, and tangled guinea grass, they came up with the two guides.

Standing in the moonlight were two of the most villainous-looking old negro men of which the Haitian hill country could boast, and it rather prides itself on achievements of that kind. Wizened, wrinkled, clad in weird garments that a scarecrow would have hesitated to wear, they looked the part of Wanga men—charm vendors—who are sort of walking delegates of the voodoo union; the highest order of the *papalois.*

THE *papalois* parted the tangled jungle growth on the right and cautiously led the way along a cleverly concealed path through a sort of cleft in the mountain to where serried stones arranged as steps led upward. Up these they toiled, sliding back, loosening pebbles and stones; catching and pulling up by small bushes to emerge at last upon a fairly well kept road with the old cloud-hung citadel of Christophe frowning down upon them, grim and gray in the moonlight.

After a short breathing spell, during which the two old *papalois* carefully reconnoitered the approach to the citadel, Slim signed for all to advance. With almost audible groans Captain Daugherty struggled along, a staggering rear guard.

There was nothing else he could do, as long as he could stand. His feet burned as if his shoes were full of red hot coals. He was even afraid to look down at them, because, judging from the way they felt, he was convinced they had swollen to twice their natural size. His clothing clung to him with the soggy affection engendered by profuse perspiration. And this condition aided the bleak mountain night wind to chill the very marrow in his bones. But he clinched his teeth and limped grimly on. At least the goal was in sight, and when he had reached it, he intended to sit down and take off his shoes, if all the ghosts and witches in Haiti grinned and gibbered over his shoulder while he was doing it. A man, even a seafaring man, can stand just so much and no more, and he had reached his tonnage sometime before.

After a slow and careful approach, as if they feared a hidden enemy, they reached at last a great nail-studded door, hung on ponderous hinges of rusty iron, that shrieked a discordant protest as it was opened.

At the sound of the opening door a startled exclamation came from an old crumbling ruin of a sentry box set against the near outer wall, followed by a hurried, stealthy scramble through the guinea grass. Startled, the two old *papalois* came to as rigid a point as prize bird dogs, never stirring until the faint hurried rustle through the guinea grass had died away down the mountain-side.

Then they looked blankly at each other, beckoned to Slim and the three whispered together. After a hurried conference, one of the old men made his way with scarcely a sound towards the heaped up tangled mess of vines about the old sentry box, and disappeared inside. In a few minutes he returned, and the three put their heads together again for a whispered conference. Seemingly satisfied, they motioned for the others to follow them inside the old fort.

"Stand still!" commanded Slim in a husky whisper when they were all inside. "Here is dangerous ground, if one knows not where to walk. He pulled to the heavy old door, shutting out the moonlight and leaving them in a darkness that could be felt.

"Now, my friends," he began hurriedly in the same husky whisper, "we must do our work quickly and be gone before the dawn; and already the night is old. To be found here by Haitian soldiers—at the very least we would be arrested and searched. Those in authority search ceaselessly for this treasure. They guard and watch this place jealously, for the reason that, desiring the treasure themselves, they fear that every one else is seeking it also. There are no guards tonight because—of the *mamaloi* back yonder.

"Therefore, you see, to be found here would be most unfortunate. And if the treasure should be found on us or even a suspicious gold coin — pauf! You can imagine the result, my friends! For these reasons we must know that we can trust each other— That no matter what happens our lips must be dumb. As they say in

Galveston, we must not give each other away.

"And now, my friends, come cautiously." He turned on his flashlight. "Step also with care. In this room, beyond there, is a dungeon into which, by a misstep, you might fall."

THEY followed cautiously after Slim; each in his own fashion. Captain Daugherty, staggering with fatigue, too tired to care whether he fell in a dungeon or not. Behind him Big'Un in a blue funk of fear which the ghostly echoing old ruin had engendered in his soul, firmly convinced in his own mind that at his back stalked the shade of Christophe. Joe made up the rear guard, drooling at the mouth with curiosity, his hand firmly clutching his most precious possession, a small nickel-plated revolver that he fearfully hoped he would be called upon to use before the night was over.

The penetrating cold of the place gripped them through their thin tropical clothing, making them shiver and their teeth chatter. If the cold had not effected this, the howling of the night wind surely would. It prowled about the old ruin in mournful wails that made one think a whole flock of Irish banshees had emigrated and become naturalized there. Then it would rush past them with sibilant whispers, to die away in ghostly echoes and murmurings that seemed to come out of the grim old walls themselves.

They came at last to the corner of the room where yawned a great round hole in the floor.

"Careful, my friends!" warned Slim. "This hole is the entrance to a deep dungeon of the kind known as *oubliette*, so called by the French who first made them; or as the English say 'bottle neck.' Far below in the side of this dungeon there is a hole in the wall which is a passageway that leads to another dungeon, far down in the bowels of the mountain. In this last dungeon, well guarded by dead men's bones, is the gold we have so toilsomely sought. And here," producing the two small black balls, "are the keys to the treasure house."

"Them's the blamedest keys I ever seen!" exclaimed the captain after he had examined the carvings on the balls. "But so is this whole cussed island, for that matter. It's all upside down an' round where it had orter be square, and bulged out where it orter be pushed in. I guess it's all right to have balls for keys, but I can't just figger it out."

"Well," replied Slim practically, "we will now build a little fire as our flashlight must be saved for use below. And we have here, too, some candles. Then we will prepare to descend. I—"

"Slim," interrupted the captain, "I just naturally can't go down in that well or pit or whatever it is. I just can't."

"I did not intend that you should, my Captain. Myself and one of the *papalois* are to descend, no one else. The rest of you remain here to watch and to hold the rope-ladder." Big'Un sighed his relief audibly, and muttered a fervent: "Thank the lawd!" But Joe's countenance fell.

"Aw say, Slim, let me go too. I want to see where the treasure is hid an' all. Please—"

"Shut up, Joe, you —— fool!" expostulated the captain from his seat on some old cannon-balls, where he was engaged in taking off his shoes. "You ain't goin' down in that pit—no such thing. If anything happened to you, your mother never would let up blaming it all on me. You ain't goin' nary step on that rope-ladder. I hadn't orter let you come this far in the first place."

To Joe's undying gratitude Slim interceded in his behalf.

"I beg of you, my Captain, let the boy descend. There is no danger. Once as a small boy I was let down into this pit by a rope tied about my waist. And at my grandmother's bidding, crawled through the hole in the pit wall into the dungeon beyond and saw the shriveled bodies of those who had perished there so miserably many years ago. The boy can come to no harm, that I swear, and all his life long he will have this adventure to think of and perhaps to brag about among his fellows when he has grown old. Let him go then. There is no more harm below with the *papaloi* and myself than there is here. Who knows?"

So, after much persuasion, the captain relented and Joe was allowed to go.

"We build now the sacred fire," said the two old *papalois* to Slim in Haitian patois. And from the little bags each one had slung over his shoulder they produced several small bundles of tiny fagots. These they built up in an orderly pile on the stone floor and, after a muttered incantation, set fire to it by means of a small piece of glowing punk from a little earthen jar.

"That fire," Slim explained to Big 'Un who was watching the proceedings, "is the sacred fire of the *papalois*, used to ward off the evil spirits of the dead and—" Slim looked about him uneasily—"the devils of this place also; the burning wood is from the coffins of good men who died in their beds."

"What!" exclaimed Big'Un, promptly backing away from the proximity of the fire. "Dem little bundles of wood made from dead men's coffins! Dat's regular devil doin's! An' dem two old men, dey looks like— Say, Slim, I's done goin' from dis here place! I's—"

"Big 'Un, my good friend," said Slim in his slow, precise manner but promptly catching Big 'Un by the arm, "wait! Be calm I beg, and listen to me for one little moment, for time presses. These two old men who are called *papalois* here in Haiti would be called witch-doctors or rain-makers in Africa; in Galveston hoodoo or conjure men. They are very wise men; wise in all the ways of magic and witchcraft known to our—to your people in Africa for a thousand years. So when they say to me that the smoke from a little fire made from the wood of dead men's coffins, which is greased with the fat from sacred goats, will act as a potent charm against all the forces of evil, I believe them, or at least I am willing for them to build the fire. Do not good Christians build fires of sulfur in the holds of ships to ward off the evil spirits of the plague? Come now! Help hold this rope-ladder so that Joe and I and the older *papaloi* may descend. Fear no evil from the little fire, but rather good. If all goes well, in the morning we will return to the *Maggie May* much richer men."

"All right, Slim," acquiesced Big'Un, "just as you say. Dese two old niggers may be *papalaws* just like you say dey is. I'll say dey is old enough lookin' to be grand *papalaws*. Maybe de old boys does know dere jobs. Dey is shorely mean enough lookin' to be fust class conjur men. Come on! I's ready to hold de rope. But fer cat's sake, Slim, don't stir up no hants down in dat well. Ifen we gits outen dis here place without bein' ghost rid or hant hunted I'll be plumb happy an' satisfied. Dis here places looks full of ghost smoke already widout dem *papalaws* startin' dat coffin fire."

"Now," said Slim in Haitian creole to the younger *papaloi* as he prepared to go down the rope-ladder, "do not forget what to do in case of surprize. Look well to these friends of mine. They be strangers in a strange land. If aught befalls them I will hold you to account before the *mamaloi*. And you know well that her arm is long."

"Do not fear," the old man replied. "I serve thee because I love the ancient blood of Christophe in thy veins. And my snake shall stand up beside thy friends."

"We descend now, my Captain," called out Slim softly to Captain Daugherty who was tenderly nursing his feet on the pile of old cannon-balls. "If luck is with us there will be gold enough for you to buy the *Maggie May*. Hold well to the rope-ladder, my friends. This dungeon is very deep. I do not care to find out how deep by falling. Remember again, my friends! If aught befalls, know nothing. Say nothing. All depends on that, otherwise—may be the *Maggie May* would return to Galveston without us."

WHILE Slim talked he was clambering quickly down the ladder, and he was soon lost in the velvety darkness below. Peering over the side, after a time they saw the glimmer of his flashlight thirty feet below. And then his muffled shout:

"I have found the hole of the tunnel. Let the others descend quickly."

The older *papaloi* then disappeared down the well's mouth. After an interval came another shout—

"Now let Joe descend."

He was finally allowed to do so, after another frantic and tearful appeal to the captain.

"All right, dern it! Go on down, but remember, if you git killed don't blame me. An' if you git crippled up, break a leg or somethin' you'll have to carry your own self back to the *Maggie May*. I couldn't carry an extra flea myself, tired as I am. You—"

But Joe was half way down the ladder. Another muffled shout announced his safe arrival, and after weighting down the rope ladder with one of the old cannon-balls, the three remaining sat down to watch and wait.

Captain Daugherty made himself as comfortable as he could, leaning back against the heap of cannon-balls. He stretched out his tired legs and aching feet and, in spite of the cold, was soon asleep.

Big 'Un was tired, too, but fear of the ghosts and goblins which his active imagination almost enabled him to see in the flickering shadows cast by the coffin wood fire kept him awake. Now that the captain was frankly and noisily asleep, Big 'Un felt utterly alone, for the old *papaloi* crouched over the impish blue flame of the fire, muttering and mumbling to himself, seemed unaware of his presence.

Outside the mountain wind howled and yelled around the massive walls of the old citadel. With *whooing* wails it would rush through the mouldering passageways, and then linger to mutter and whisper ghoulishly in the vaulted ceilings of empty rooms. With great sighs, it would vent itself through shafts that penetrated to former dungeons. And then, with a rushing roar, it would begin all over again as if the archfiend himself stalked that night among the ruined rooms and empty cells, searching for the last soul of Christophe, who certainly in his day had served his satanic majesty faithfully and well.

As the wind gradually died down, the penetrating chill of the mountain night crept in through the thick stone walls and forced the fearsome Big 'Un to seek the comfort of the little fire, in spite of its spooky origin. On the opposite side the *papaloi* curled himself up and was soon asleep, secure in the potency of the fire to ward off evil spirits and discourage the devils of the mountain. At last fatigue overcame fear and Big 'Un too fell in a shivering doze.

Half an hour passed. Suddenly the old rusty nail-studded door was flung open and Captain Daugherty swallowed an extra loud reverberating snore as a flashlight flared and a harsh American voice commanded—

"Stand up and hold up your hands, every —— one of you."

AT THE door stood a tall sergeant of U. S. Marines with a service automatic in his hand. Just behind him, and a little to one side was a dapper coffee-colored soldier in the uniform of the gendarmes of Haiti, bellowing out the same order in Haitian creole.

It requires more time to read this than the erstwhile slumbering *papaloi* required to get into action. The door had scarcely opened and the order snapped out before he was on his feet and emptying a small bag of powder on the fire. At once there was vomited forth a dense acrid smoke, which to all intents and purposes was a very effective smoke screen and a combined tear and sneeze gas. He then tossed the rope-ladder down the dungeon well and faded from the scene under cover of his improvised smoke screen before Captain Daugherty and Big'Un had realized what had happened. By the time they had coughed, gagged, sneezed and cried until the dense smoke had drifted towards the high vaulted ceiling, it was too late to follow the *papaloi's* example, for Captain Daugherty was in the firm clutches of a U. S. Marine and Big'Un likewise.

"Now then, you boys, where's the other little old nigger that was in here when we opened the door, and who raised such a rumpus with that smoke? He didn't jump down that well, did he?"

"Anyhow," Big'Un muttered to himself philosophically, "dese here folks talk United States, even if we is arrested. An' dey is Marine cops, too."

His muttered meditations were terminated abruptly by a tooth-rattling shake from the husky Marine who held him.

"Didn't you hear me? Where's that other nigger gone? Or don't you understand United States? Here, Charlie! Talk Haitian to this bird."

"No suh! Not me, Capen!" protested Big'Un. "I don't talk dat monkey talk! I is United States my ownself; from Galveston I is. An' I belongs on de *Maggie May*, de fruit steamer what's tied up down at Cap Haitien. I don't know where dat little dried up nigger is gone. An' what's more, I don't know as I keers, ifen you asks me."

"So you are from the *Maggie May*, are you?" exulted the marine. "That's luck! And does your buddie—that old bird over there coughing and spitting, is he in your crew?" And the marine indicated Captain Daugherty who was still looking the Uncle Tom rôle very well in the dim light of the marine's lantern. "Or does he talk this Gook (Marine for Haitian) lingo?"

"No suh," answered Big'Un promptly, "he ain't no Hate-eye man. He is—" and then the words fell over each other in his mouth, and he almost bit his tongue in his efforts to check what he was going to say, which would have revealed Captain Daugherty's true identity.

"What did you say his name was?" prompted the Marine. "I didn't quite catch it."

"He is—he is—de cook on de *Maggie May,* an'—an' we calls him 'Cookie,'" Big'Un replied, searching his soul in vain for a suitable name but, with the exception of the cook, he could not remember the names of any of the *Maggie May's* crew. "Cookie is what we calls him, an' dats all de name I knows," he answered truthfully.

"How come you boys up here on this mountain in this spooky old fort, this time of night?"

"Boss, me an' Cookie, we was—just sorter prowlin' around Cap Haitien, an' we met up wid dat old man who made the smoke, an' we got kinder acquainted-like—an'—an' had a few noggins of rum together. Dat wus day befo' yestiddy an'—he brung us home wid him to dat little village where he lives at—I don't remember the name—"

"Was it Milot?" prompted the Marine sergeant.

"Yessir, Capen. Dat wus de name, Meelot. An' dat ole man, he tole us about dis here ole fort dat a nigger king had built. An' he said dat we had orter see hit, an' dat he'd show hit to us. So we all started, an den—er den we stopped to see a rooster fight. When we all got here it was plumb dark, an' de ole man he said he was skeered to go down de mountain in de dark. So we come in here an' built a fire an—"

"Where were the guards?" interrupted the Marine sergeant.

"Says which, boss?"

"Where were the guards? The negro soldiers that are supposed to guard this place day and night."

"Boss, dere warn't no guards here when we come. Nobody's; nothin', excusin' some varmint or 'nother dat run off down through de brush when we opened de big door outside."

"Didn't that old man offer to show you and the cook where some gold was buried, if you would pay him for the trouble? Money that was guarded by spirits and couldn't be dug up by a native Gook, but could be dug up by some one outside. Some cock-and-bull story like that?"

Big'Un's expressive countenance assumed the innocent frankness of a young child's.

"What did you say erbout money, boss? Dere ain't no money buried round here, shore nough, is dey?"

"What boat did you say you was on?" asked the Marine sergeant still suspicious.

"De *Maggie May,*" answered Big'Un promptly glad to change the subject. "De *Maggie May* from Galveston; fruit steamer. She is at Cap Haitien."

"Coastwise fruiter, is she?" mused the Marine sergeant. "The *Maggie May*—why, I know that boat! Skippered by an old crab named Daugherty?"

"Dat's him!" answered Big'Un with a furtive sidelong glance in the direction of Captain Daugherty who had stopped coughing and was glaring at the Marine sergeant. "Leastways, his name is Capen Daugherty. But I can't say dat he is a crab, cause he always—"

"'Taint the Daugherty I know, if he ain't a crab," contended the Marine sergeant, loudly and emphatically. "The one I know would dock a dying man's pay for the time it took him to die. And then he'd sell his sea-chest for money to pay for the sail-cloth for his shroud. Go tell that bunkie of yours to come here if he has got over that gas attack. I want to give him the once-over too. Then, if you two can show clearance papers, we'll take you down the mountain, and you can hike on back to Cap Haitien.

"And when I get my hands on that nigger sentinel that hot hoofed it down to my camp and told me there was a party of treasure hunters up here digging up this old rock pile and carting it off, I'll make him carry a rail half a day in the hot sun for spoiling my beauty sleep.

"Have you got ship passes?" asked the Marine sergeant, when Big'Un returned with the benign-looking old Uncle Tom in his wake.

"Yessir, here's mine," and Big'Un promptly produced his well worn shore pass. "Now, old man, where's yours?"

Captain Daugherty was so sleepy, so utterly weary, besides being still choked and nauseated by the *papaloi's* villainous smoke screen that he did not at first comprehend what had been asked. But a shake from the colored gendarme aroused him.

"Your pass of the sheep, where is he?" he asked in the English that was the pride of his heart.

"Pass which?" asked the bewildered captain. And then half involuntarily he put his hand in the inside pocket of his rough sea jacket where he had his authority as a high seas skipper. However, his benumbed faculties began to function, and he hastily withdrew his hand. To betray himself as captain of the *Maggie May* would place him in a very embarrassing situation, to say the least. So he mumbled, "Ain't got my shore pass. Must have lost it somewhere."

"But he's all right, Capen," put in Big'Un ingratiatingly. "He is from de *Maggie May*. He come here wid me all right."

"Well, I can see for myself that he is here now," answered the Marine sergeant dryly. "And I know too that he ain't a Haitian nigger. He talks United States too well. But who is he? That's what I want to know, and if he had his shore pass that would clear the matter up."

"Boss, I done tole you—" began Big'Un eagerly, but the sergeant waved him down. "Here, old man, tell me all about yourself. Are you one of the *Maggie May's* crew?"

"Yes, I am," answered the captain promptly, glad to be able to tell the truth and conceal his identity at the same time. "I belong on the *Maggie May*."

"See here, old man! Put a 'sir' to your answers to me! I'll bet old man Daugherty learnt you how to say 'sir' long before now. Is the old bird still skipper on the *Maggie May*, or has somebody won the Galveston Long Shoremen's Union prize for bumping him off?"

Big'Un groaned almost audibly as he saw Captain Daugherty's fists clinch and watched him struggle for breath. With a mighty effort the captain controlled himself, but he could not repress the aggressive tone of his voice as he replied:

"Well, the Galveston Longshoremen ain't been called on to pay no reward so far. Cap'n Daugherty is still alive an' in command of the *Maggie May*, or leastways he was when I left Cap Haitien," he added hastily. "Where did you know Cap'n Daugherty?"

The puzzled look with which the marine sergeant had been regarding the supposed old Uncle Tom variety of colored A. B. suddenly changed into a grin of unholy joy. Just in time he caught a betraying exclamation between his teeth and changed it into—

"I know the old cap'n. He's a pompous bull-headed old crab. You don't have to know him long to find that out. But that's neither here nor there. Where is that other old nigger that was setting over there by the little fire when I opened the door. Where did he go?"

"I don't know where he went," replied the erstwhile Captain Daugherty. "All I know is, we were all asleep, dozing, waiting for daylight so we could leave this here dinged—refrigerator when you busted in that door over there. The old man jumped up, throwed something on the fire. It made a smoke that just about strangled me to death. And when the smoke cleared away he was gone."

The Marine sergeant took the lantern and walked about the room looking at the various exits. He paused beside the dungeon shaft.

"Could he have fallen in this well hole?"

Captain Daugherty and Big'Un gave themselves up for lost as he leaned over and shouted down—

"Hey! Are you down there?"

No sound came back and they breathed a sigh of relief when he turned to them and said—

"Well, I guess if the old goat's fell down that hole he is in China by this time, or gone to glory in a mashed up heap."

He looked at the watch on his wrist. "Well, it's just about daylight. Come on, let's hike along. I'll take you down to my camp at Milot and let the Haitian general of commune give you the once-over. If he says you are O. K. you can go on back to your ship. If he don't—"

The Marine sergeant stooped and began to adjust his leggings. Big'Un waited patiently for him to complete the sentence. Apparently the Marine sergeant had forgotten the matter when he raised up from adjusting his leggings to hitch his service automatic around to the front of his belt. That "If he don't—" was too suggestive of potential evil for Big'Un to allow any uncertainty.

"An ifen everything ain't all right, what den, boss?"

The sergeant regarded his two charges with a malicious and significant smile that promptly lowered Big'Un's mental barometer twenty degrees below cheerfulness.

"Well, boy, we are building a new road, or rather rebuilding the old one that Christophe built through the valley and up the mountains. We ain't got as many niggers as he had when he built it. We could use a hundred more hands easy— And I think you two would find the mountain air stimulating and refreshing; the chow ain't so bad either. Better than Cap'n Daugherty's slum.

"We don't keep any prisoners in the bull-pen now. We put 'em all to work on that road and we are sure getting along well with that road," the Marine sergeant concluded enthusiastically, watching out of the tail of his eye the effect of his words on his victims. "You boys would enjoy working on it for two or three months. It couldn't be no worse than working for old man Daugherty who would dock your wages two dollars for denting the donkey winch if you fell against it in a heavy sea."

The Marine sergeant could not see the angry flush that rose to Captain Daugherty's face because it was well covered with burnt-cork grease paint. And the captain's effort to persuade his swollen feet once more to consent to enter his shoes logically accounted for the muttered curses and grinding teeth with which the camouflaged skipper of the *Maggie May* was trying to restrain his outraged feelings; or at least the sergeant appeared to be unaware that the irate captain was glaring at him with blood in his eye.

Rather he regarded him curiously, as if he was wondering at this strange specimen of seafaring animal who seemed to hesitate when given an opportunity to help villify the "Old Man."

However, the captain's anger gave way to terror as his mind reverted to Slim. Suppose he or Joe should take into their heads to yell up the dungeon shaft? They had been down there long enough to have accomplished their purpose, if they ever expected to. And when they reached the end of the passage which opened out into the main shaft and found the rope-ladder gone, what was more natural than to yell up an inquiry? To be caught hunting for Christophe's treasure was a greater crime in the eyes of Haitian law than to assassinate the president. Slim had impressed that upon him. He saw himself sentenced to build a network of roads all over Haiti.

With this thought to spur his efforts, the last refractory shoe went on and he announced himself as ready to go. All the captain asked of Providence now was to get out and away from the citadel promptly and safely. That was his greatest worry. He felt sure the old *papaloi* who had fled would manage somehow to get his brother witch-hound and Slim and Joe out of the dungeon. If he didn't, just as soon as he could get back to the *Maggie May*, wash up and get in his uniform, he would see to it himself. He would go to the American consul and have them out in two hours. Anyhow the future could take care of itself.

THIS the future proceeded to do that morning about ten, when the procession from the citadel marched into the village of Milot. Captain Daugherty, who was hobbling in the extreme rear of the column, had reached that acute condition of foot and leg exhaustion known among cowboys as "road-foundered." Never much of a landsman, the road down the mountain had tried out his every weak point. Descending the narrow rocky winding path had been a constant fight with tricky slippery mud, bamboo briars, creepers, and twisted, tangled guinea grass that clung about his ankles with the tenacity of an affectionate boa constrictor.

Then, when they reached the plain there was more and better mud that adhered to his clothing and agglutinated about his feet as he waded and floundered through mud-holes that all but reached the dignity of morasses. Added to this discomfort, the sun, which was now well up over the mountains, was scalding hot upon the road. It caused the slimy ill-smelling mud to steam and dance with heat waves. It blistered the back of the captain's neck and burned a hole between his shoulder blades.

The procession halted at last before a long, low whitewashed frame building, around which ran a narrow brick-paved veranda. On the right of the entrance was the United States' flag, on the left the blue-and-maroon flag of Haiti. It was the marine-controlled headquarters of the Gendarmerie d' Haiti, for the commune of Milot.

With a last feeble spurt of fast waning strength expanded in a walk that was a combination stagger and hobble, Captain Daugherty managed to reach the shade of the veranda, and sat down with a sigh of relief on an ancient bench made black and slick by countless culprits who had sat there before him.

Usually they had foregathered there at

the urgent request of General Julius Bose Alphonse Samuel Maria Marmalade, General de Division, and Des Armies de la Republique, Aide de Camp Honoraire de Son Excellence, le President d'Haiti, Commandant de la Place et de la Commune de Milot. However, coming down to plain English and the facts in the case, his excellency, during the marine occupation, was serving his country under the humble title of Juge de Paix, or Justice of the Peace. Only assuming his former rank and glory, not to mention the titles, when in the sacred and secret confines of the lodge rooms of the Sons of African Freedom, where, far from the watchful eye and attentive ear of the sergeant of Marines, he could safely curse *Les Blancs* to his complete content.

At other times he functioned as a justice of the peace only. And these judicial acts were Marine guided, which precluded the old fashioned Haitian bribery system. The general was rapidly acquiring a reputation for honesty, and for incorruptible justice tempered with mercy, that caused him tears of unavailing regret. He had seriously contemplated suicide when he found that even the time-honored privilege of tampering with the army pay roll had been taken from him. And that he was required to sit idly by and see the soldiers and gendarmes paid regularly each month, and in full.

This day, however, all unwittingly, fortune was again to perch upon his banners. He was surprized at his breakfast in the bosom of his numerous family, by the Marine sergeant who, losing no time with the polite preliminaries which were so dear to the general's heart, stated at once the object of his visit.

"General," he said, in his mixture of Haitian creole and English, "I've got two men over at my headquarters that I caught in the citadel of Christophe—"

"Ah!" interrupted the general, laying down his knife and fork, but keeping a watchful eye on the choicest portions of food. "These obscene pigs were, no doubt, seeking for the gold of Christophe! His excellency, the president, will be glad to hear of this! It will sustain him in the policy advised by me. For months the minister of war, who is my enemy, has strived to poison his excellency's mind against me by declaring that the guard maintained at the emperor's citadel was a useless expense, and that I was the foolish one to insist that the place be protected. Did these vile ones by any chance discover—"

"No, they found nothing; not a soumarkee. And they swore that they were up there sight-seeing, and were only waiting for daylight, because they were afraid to go down the mountain in the dark. But what I came to say was this: I want you to try these birds, and then give 'em the limit for trespassing on government property, the citadel you understand. I need men for road-working, so put the *corve'*—Haitian road law—to 'em, good and plenty. They are American sailors and I know 'em. See? And I want to stick 'em good and plenty for leaving their ship. But I want you to act as if I didn't have anything to do with it but to carry out your orders. Do you get me?"

"I don't exactly comprehend. I—"

"Lissen, General! All I want you to do is to put the *corve'* law on these two birds, good and plenty. Give 'em six months' road-working, if you can. Go the limit. Then order me to carry out your sentence, see?"

"Ho! Ho!" exclaimed the general as he saw the light. "I observe! I comprehend!" He pulled pensively at his little wisp of goatee. "In the old days," he remarked softly, regarding the Marine sergeant with shrewd eyes, "when my power was absolute in this commune, we could have ordered these fowls—I mean birds," he corrected himself hastily, "we could have ordered these prisoners shot, you and I. But now—?" he paused inquiringly, sighed, and looked furtively at the Marine sergeant.

"But now," replied the Marine sergeant hastily ignoring the sinister hint, "all we can do is work the deuce out of 'em on the Government roads. Anyway, that will satisfy me in this case. And it's worth—" The sergeant stopped abruptly. He had intended saying "worth a month's pay to me," but he thought just in time of the general's chronically itching palm. "Here, General," and he placed an American silver dollar in the gaunt and yearning hand, "the drinks are on me. You stick these guys good and plenty. I have my reasons. And I won't forget it when it comes my turn to do you a favor. See?"

The general saw. Deep down in his soul he considered the sudden restoration of a free rein in rendering decisions ample recompense for any favor he might render the

Marine sergeant who was really his superior officer. But he did not so express himself. "Are these miserable malefactors *blancs?*" he inquired.

"No, blacks. But they are American blacks. Men I know who live in the United States."

"Ah!" exclaimed the general. "Then am I very curious. I have never seen any of those downtrodden wage slaves—er—er—these American blacks." He corrected himself hastily, for the Marine sergeant was regarding him steadily in a way he had learned not to like. "I—I will repair to the place of justice as quickly as I can adjust my official toilet," he concluded, rising from the breakfast table. "Until then, adieu, my friend."

* * *

THIS conversation in the general's residence just across the only street, or rather main pig path, of the town had allowed time for all the able-bodied population of the village, male and female, children and adults to gather about the gendarmie's station. To this collection was rapidly added all the dogs, a large representation of the lean and hungry hogs, and most of the chickens.

Many varied and vivid stories regarding the captives were being bandied about the crowd, these tales being limited only by the teller's imagination, or his or her ability to make themselves heard above the common din.

Finally, two of these tales crowding out all the others had gained about an equal number of adherents. One, that two particularly fierce and ferocious Cacos had been captured after a sanguinary conflict in which ten gendarmes, including one Marine, had been killed outright, and a dozen more crippled for life. That tale was forging ahead until this lurid one was brought out. Christophe's treasure had been found at last, and by these two captives who had been caught in the very act. Just as they were preparing to flee to a mysterious cave in the mountain, each with a great sack of gold on his back, they were captured. For the devil himself who must have had a personal interest in the matter suddenly appeared in person on the open highway and warned La Blanc, the captain of the gendarmes, of the fact. And the captain had hurried to the citadel and found the treasure hunters, just as the devil had said he would.

Captain Daugherty, drooping on the bench, nursing his burning feet and aching calves, was too tired to care, even if he had known that the crowd was discussing him in the character of an especially ferocious rebel and highway robber. Big'Un, who sat upright, staring about him curiously, was perhaps the prime favorite. One prepossessing young woman had already positively identified him as the bandit Caco who had crashed out of the jungle into the road and stolen her three fat chickens and garden produce, as she was going to market last market day.

The general lingered in his house long enough to don his gorgeous green uniform covered with gold braid, and to girt about his lean flanks his sword of ceremony, before he sallied forth to the trial of the malefactors.

With a military mien and haughty bearing, he made his way through the noisy jabbering crowd who stood aside respectfully and entered the small barracks room that he referred to poetically as "the hall of justice." He sat himself down upon the reed-bottom chair behind the plain wood table, as upon a throne.

He hefted his saber over between his long bony legs with a sinister clank, cleared his throat noisily, and glared about the room. Outside the black sub-lieutenant of gendarmes announced in a loud bellow that the peace court of justice presided over by His Excellency, General Julius Bose Alphonse Samuel Maria Marmalade, was now open for the administration of justice, and the ruthless vengeance of the just laws of the republic.

"Let malefactors beware! Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité!"

These preliminaries over, the Marine sergeant who was also captain of the gendarmes lost no time in bringing in the prisoners and explaining the nature of the proceedings to them.

"You men were caught trespassing on Haitian government property. One of the sentinels—where the rest of the guard was I do not know—saw you entering the citadel. He ran down the mountain and reported to me that from your actions he judged your party was up there seeking for Christophe's treasure. And because he made this report I will have to have you tried as treasure hunters before this justice of the peace. It's merely a matter of form. All you have to do is prove that you are American sailors from the *Maggie May* and tell the same tale you told me, then everything will be Jake, with maybe a small fine to pay, and you will soon be on your way back to Cap Haitien."

"Capen," inquired Big 'Un anxiously, "you don't mean us is to be tried by dat long, lean, lank nigger settin' up behind dat table, wid de sword an' de Knights of Pythias uniform on, does you? Is he de jedge?" The Marine sergeant nodded. "What kinder country is dis here anyhow, boss? Nigger's bossin' things! Nigger cops, an' nigger soldiers, an' nigger justices of de peace! I don't want to be tried by no nigger! Sides dat, we ain't done nothin'."

The general of division hammered on the table in front of him with the hilt of his saber.

"Silence!" he bellowed. "Silence! Soldiers of the Republic! Produce silence in the hall of justice, and bring forward the prisoners. Nay!" as the gendarmes began to lead Captain Daugherty forward, "Nay! Bring forward first that large one. He who talks so loudly. Perhaps we may weaken his great voice before he has finished with the courts of the republic."

Big'Un was hustled forward by the willing hands of two spindle-legged *gens de couleur*, in the uniform of the local police.

"Prisoner, your name?" demanded the general haughtily, while one of the gendarmes prepared to write down the testimony in a big book.

"My name's Big'Un," answered the prisoner after the sergeant of Marines had translated the question. "I is de fireman on de *Maggie May*, de fruit steamer from Galveston."

The general raised disdainful eyebrows when the Marine sergeant translated and explained Big'Un's answer.

"Large one! Big one! Mon Dieu! What a name! Yet it is just such a name as one would expect the uneducated, uncouth black of the United States of America to bear. What boy! Is that name 'the large one' the only name that you possess? Had you no father, no mother to bestow upon you the blessing of a dignified family name? Such a name as I possess? Me! I am General Julius Bose Alphonse Samuel Maria Marmalade, while you—you—you inglorious worm of the dust," continued the general triumphantly, remembering the ephithet that a political rival had once applied to him, "you, having no name, call thyself The Large One! Ha! Away with him, valiant and brave soldiers of the republic! Away with him!

"Let him serve twelve months at hard labor upon the roads of our glorious republic. Perhaps during that time of labor and travail he may secure for himself a name. Until such time," bellowed the general rising and pounding the table with his saber, "remember! No rest! No mercy! No—no—nothing of a refined nature until this Large One shall find a name! Faugh!"

And the general, pausing for breath, wiped his perspiring face with a large purple silk handkerchief, that had mysteriously disappeared from the coat-tail pocket of the minister of the interior on the night of the president's birthday ball.

By a mighty effort of the will the sergeant of Marines was able to control his desire to laugh, and gave the nervous and bewildered Big'Un a free translation of the general's tirade. While the sergeant interpreted, Big'Un developed for the first time in his life an earnest desire to be able to speak another language besides English. To have been able to so express himself that this gold-braided skeleton with the big sword could thoroughly and completely understand just what an honest colored fireman of a United States fruit steamer thought of him, would have been worth at least a leg.

"Don't like my name, don't he?" Big'Un grunted when the sergeant had finished interpreting. "Well, Capen, you tell dat nigger fer me dat Big'Un is just my short name. De name I works wid. I has got a longer name I uses fer Sundays an' Christmus. Hit's de name dey give me when dey baptized me, an' it's lots longer an' more hiferlutin dan his'n. It's Bill Tom Joe Abraham Linkcomb George Washington Grove Cleveland Sam Houston Santa Anna Liza Jane Mañana Jones. Tell him dat, please suh, an' den tell him dat as fer as a paw an' maw goes I has got one real daddy, two stepdaddies, one shore enough maw, and two maw-in-laws 'sides seventeen aunts an' twenty-five uncles. Tell him I has got mo' kinfolks in one town in Texas dan he can count in a week. An' den tell him dat I has got a uniform at home dat will lay over his'n anyway you looks at it. An' a helmet hat wid a plume on it dat hangs nearly all de way down muh back. Tell him all dat, please suh. May be dat will hold dat nigger fer awhile."

As much of this as was thought expedient was translated to the general, who expressed himself as highly gratified that "the uncouth American black from our sister republic had a real dignified name," but he said nothing about relaxing the severity of his sentence.

Then came Captain Daugherty's turn, and, even with Big'Un's facile lying to assist him, he made out a very poor case. His claim that he was the cook on the *Maggie May*, which was confirmed by Big'Un, fell flat because he could not produce a ship's shore pass. Failing in this, and not willing to disclose his real identity by the papers he could have shown, the rest of the supposed cook's testimony was a series of hums and haws and smothered profanity.

THE general of division and aide de camp to the republic of Haiti inhaled a deep breath and rose to the occasion. And to him it was indeed an occasion. For beyond the small circle of gendarmes about the prisoners, pressed and crowded his gaping constituents and fellow townsmen. For months these had witnessed his old time justice which was now administered under the watchful eye of the Marine sergeant, so tempered with mercy and common sense that they had lost all fear, and therefore all respect for him. Realizing his loss of caste, the general had chafed against the curb, had fretted and fumed, but to no avail. He had learned in the early days of "the occupation" that the arm of the Marine Corps was long, and on occasion could be ruthless and avenging.

He had also observed that individual members of that same corps had nervous trigger fingers and were qualified marksmen. So he did his chafing and fuming in the bosom of his family or in the lodge room of the Sons of African Freedom. And was suave and coöperative with the Marines in public. Preferring after all, deep down in his soul, the certain sure salary of his office under the Marine regime to the occasional rich pickings of the old grafting days of irresponsible tyranny when he had robbed the underdog only to have to submit to being robbed in turn by the fellow higher up. If only he had not been shorn of all the powers and honors of his office, the pompous dignity and gold braid, the high sounding titles!

However, today for some blessed reason, his former power and glory had been suddenly restored. Once more the gendarmes sprang to do his bidding. Once more the people eyed him with respect. Even the white sergeant of Marines was deferential. The general was descended from a race that dwells not on yesterday, nor thinks of tomorrow, but lives only for today. So he did not waste any time in speculating on the wherefore of this sudden turn in his fortunes, but girded up his loins and proceeded to enjoy himself.

"Will you, misguided reptile," began the general, leaning over the table and shaking a long, lean finger under Captain Daugherty's astonished nose, "will you, ignorant half slave and down trodden dog from our sister republic of America, will you dare to try to trifle with and defy the laws of this most liberal and fraternal republic by wandering over this fair land kissed by God's sun, without a pass from your ship? Ha! Answer me, pig! You have no means of identification, no pass? Brave soldiers of the republic! Seize and search him. He may be a Dominican spy who has sneaked over the border! At him, valiant soldiers! Place before me, your general, every scrap of paper, every weapon, money, everything that is concealed on his miserable body!"

Captain Daugherty, of course, had not understood one word of the general's oration. And he was so tired and sleepy he had scarcely been interested in his gestures, so he looked inquiringly at the sergeant. The Marine sergeant who had been hugely enjoying himself, opened his mouth to translate, but he was too late. Before he could even interpose the four colored gendarmes had seized the captain and begun to search him.

At first the captain was too astonished to resist. But as soon as he realized that they meant to rob him, or at least disclose his identity by searching him, his gorge rose and righteous anger dispelled his weariness. He spoke to the colored gendarmes in that flowery, eloquent, but censored language that is considered a nautical necessity in doubling the cape in a wind-jammer. And while he was protesting verbally and profanely he found that he was not tired in the arms, and was also recovering the use of his legs. So he thrashed about with his arms and kicked with his legs until he had cleared a space about him.

He was ready for them when they rushed him again and soon discovered that the peaceful fruit steamer years had not entirely incapacitated his right arm punch, for he stopped the sous-lieutenant with it, and sent him crashing against the general's table. He hit a corner of it with his head, overturned it and went peacefully to sleep. Then turning quickly, the captain caught the bandy-legged corporal on the jaw with the same right, and he went staggering against the wall.

The general made a leap towards the door. As he explained afterwards to the Sons of African Freedom, he was not trying to beat a strategic retreat. He merely intended going home for reinforcements in the shape of his trusty pearl-handled revolver, of large and rusty frame, that in moments of enthusiasm could be depended on not to miss fire in more than three chambers out of the six in the cylinder. However Big'Un misunderstood the general long before the Sons of African Freedom did. He thought him joining in the fight against Captain Daugherty.

Big'Un was reasonably sure the captain could be depended on to handle the four undernourished gendarmes, and was enjoying the fight; but five might be too many. So he reached out and grabbed the general by his military sash. It came away in his hand, bringing with it the sword of ceremony. Back the general staggered into Big'Un's welcoming arms, and although he writhed and squirmed to escape, Big'Un got a firm hold of the seat of the warrior's trousers with one hand, and a grip of his gold-braided collar with the other.

Then he gave a mighty heave with the muscles overdeveloped by years of shoveling coal into a steamer's fiery maw, and catapulted him through the door. Unfortunately for the general, the door was at that time jammed with shouting, screaming negroes of both sexes, all ages and sizes, and these prevented his complete exit. Just at that moment Big'Un suddenly remembered that he had a private quarrel with the general. So he seized him by the foot, all that was now visible of that mighty warrior, and yanked him back into the "hall of justice."

"Ain't got no paw and maw, has I? Take dat! Ain't eddicated, is I? See ifen you can' read dis here kick! Ain't got no name, has I? Well, dis here kick is named liver, loosener! Git up ofen dat floor, nigger, an' fite! Fite fair an' square! Tain't fair to jus' lay dere an' holler!"

All this happened very quickly, before the Marine sergeant, weak from laughter, had time to shove his way through the struggling crowd at the door, and blow his whistle for his own men who were listening to the noise of the battle from their own barracks a few hundred yards away. Judging from the amount of noise that a full grown riot was under way, they came on the run.

Just as the corporal in charge of the squad had succeeded in pushing his way through the entire population of the village crowded about the door, striving to get an eyeful of the proceedings inside, he saw something that made him think the whole thing was a dream, and that he would wake up presently and find himself late for reveille.

He saw the colored sous-lieutenant of gendarmes reach out a frenzied hand and seize a portly dignified colored man by the hair of the head, and try to drag him off of a struggling colored gendarme he was attempting to brain with a table leg. The thick mass of kinky hair came away in the sous-lieutenant's hand, and a wiry mop of reddish-brown hair streaked with gray took its place. And then the belligerent camouflaged one, still bestriding his prostrate victim, paused in his job of trying to brain him, long enough to wipe the sweat out of his own eyes. As he did so, a dirty grayish streak of white appeared where the now warmed up burnt cork grease paint came away on the wiper's sleeve.

The corporal was not the only one astonished.

Un blanc!" stuttered the dumb-founded sous-lieutenant. "*Un blanc!*"

"No I ain't On Blank!" raged Captain Daugherty, giving his prostrate enemy's head a final thump on the floor and springing to his feet, too angry now to remember any simple French words he might have known, or that he had ever been tired. "I am Captain Daugherty of the *Maggie May*. An' I can whip all the dern niggers on this here heathen man's island by myself, if these here supposed to be white men won't help! Standin' there laughin' an' gigglin' whilst these here bowlegged, watery-eyed hellians is tryin' to rob a white man! Come on, Big'Un! Kill that there grand marshal of the day you've got there, an' throw him out the winder. Grab a leg of that table an' we'll fite our way out an' back to the *Maggie May!* Come on! All of you! If you think you can lick me!"

But while the valiant captain was uttering the battle cry of his clan, the Marines had dragged Big'Un off the fallen general of division, seized the captain from behind and the battle was over. All but clearing the "hall of justice" of the débris and the citizens of the village.

"Well! Well! So you are a white man after all!" ventured the Marine sergeant, his face twitching with his efforts to suppress the grin that struggled for expression. "Why I thought— Why this man here said you was a shipmate of his. And now I find—"

"And so I am!" snapped Captain Daugherty whose personal barometer had not receded from the fighting level. "And he has proved a better shipmate to me than my own color. Leastways as far as this here crowd is concerned. 'Fightin' Marines!' I'll say you are! Thought you was here to protect Americans! 'Stid o' that, the first thing that happens to me, I git arrested and drug down a mountain and then about a hundred miles along a road full of mud and slush that smells like—like a dead slaughter house; with no breakfast nor nothin'. An' then I git yanked up before a nigger justice of the peace. Heck alone knows what he said he'd do to me. I didn't understand his heathen talk. But the way he waved his arms an' bellered and bulled around, it must have been a-plenty. An' he'd a done it, too, if it hadn't been for Big'Un here.

"Big'Un, shake hands! I won't fergit you as long as I live. An' we'd have whipped 'em too, Big'Un, good and plenty, if it hadn't been for these here brave, lily-white American Marine boys; now if they'll let us, we'll kiss 'em good-by an' go on back to Cap Haitien."

"Hold on, Captain Daugherty! You've said some pretty hard things about the Marines. Now I want to ask you something. Would you uphold and protect a man who was disobeying the laws of the country you was serving?"

"Well—I—"

"Just answer yes or no, please," insisted the Marine sergeant sweetly.

"Well, no! Dern it! I wouldn't. But I ain't disobeyin' no law as far as I know. An' anyway, I would hesitate a long time afore I would take sides agin' a white man, in a black man's country; right or wrong. An' that's all I've got to say."

"Yes," replied the Marine sergeant dryly. "And that's what makes life down here one grand, sweet song. White men come down here, start something and then they expect us to take sides and finish it for 'em. And how was I to know you was white, all dolled up like you was, until your wig got yanked off?"

"That's so!" agreed Captain Daugherty. "I guess I was a little hasty about what I said about the Marines. You didn't know I was white and anyway—"

"But I did know you was white!" grinned the Marine sergeant. "I knew it up there in Christophe's citadel. I knew Big 'Un the minute I set my eyes on him. Knew you, too, as soon as you spoke, in spite of Big 'Un's gosh-awful lies. I wasn't your cabin boy six months for nothing. Don't you remember Henry?"

"What!" gasped Captain Daugherty, "What! Henry! That little bity runt that skipped out an' left me at Porty Cortez because I spanked him a little for gittin' in a row with some of them greasers at a chicken fight! You don't mean to say you are him?"

"I am the same," replied the Marine sergeant. "And," he continued slyly, "the reason I went A.W.O.L. on you was not on account of the spanking which I perhaps deserved, but because I thought white men should always stand together in a black man's country, or a brown one's either. I have been waiting all these years to get even with you and I think now I have given you a dose of your own medicine. But what you and Big 'Un were doing up there on that mountain in Christophe's old citadel beats me. Come clean now! Were you up there after the treasure?"

Big 'Un, who had been listening open-mouthed, with an occasional pious exclamation of "Well, since Moses hit de rock!" or "My lawd! is dis li'l' Henry?" now broke into the conversation with "Henry—boss—Capen, we was up dere just like I said. Just lookin' around. An' de Capen here, he got hisself up dat way so dem wild niggers would think he was one his own self an' not pay him no mind. We wasn't huntin' no treasure. We was just percolatin' around, seein' de sights."

"Well, Big 'Un, you would have percolated yourself into prison if anybody but me and my men had found you. The captain says you were not disobeying any law, but I'm here to tell you you were disobeying about the only law the Haitians try to enforce. It's the highest law in this land that Christophe's treasure must not be searched for by any one but the president himself. And only by him when everybody else is there to look on. To be caught hanging around the old citadel in suspicious circumstances is to be promptly jailed. If caught digging, you would be as promptly shot. And if you had chanced to find anything valuable, your body would be dug up once a year and shot all over again. That's how much these gooks think of Christophe's treasure. They think he hid away somewhere about thirty million in gold. It may be less than thirty cents, but they are surely sitting up with the remains. They trust nobody regarding the citadel, not even themselves. They change the guards every other day, and search each squad carefully as they are changed."

"Guards!" exclaimed Captain Daugherty blankly, his jaw dropping as he recalled for the first time in the last three stirring hours that Joe and Slim had been in the citadel's dungeon for some time without water or food. "Guards? Do they keep guards up there all the time, day and night?"

"They most certainly do," replied the Marine sergeant. "And where they were last night when you two reached the citadel beats my time. At that, one of 'em was there, and rushed down here to tell me, but he didn't explain where the others were. Now then!" and the Marine sergeant turned again suddenly to Captain Daugherty. "As I said before, come clean with me! What were you doing up there in Christophe's citadel? You can't fool me. People don't go to visit an old ruin in the dead of night, even if it's a moonlight night. Don't try to fill me with that sort of bull. And you wasn't lost, either. And there were more than two of you, too. There were several in the party. I know that. I was told so by the guard, and besides I saw more than two of you when I opened the door. Now where are the rest of your party?"

THE Marine sergeant paused for a reply, furtively watching, while the captain and Big 'Un exchanged blank looks. "Nothing to say, eh?" he snapped. "All right then! Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to lock you both up and go back to the citadel and see if I can trace the rest of your party. I'll bet you were up there after that treasure. I can tell it by the way you acted up there, and by the way you play shut mouth now."

The captain had been searching his soul for the solution to the problem as to what he should do about Joe and Slim. He had the guilty feeling of having abandoned them to the awful fate of slow starvation in the old dungeon of the citadel. He was now minded to make a full confession, thereby paving the way to their immediate rescue. He had opened his mouth to begin, but shut it again when he remembered how earnestly Slim had cautioned them to say nothing, no matter what happened. So he tried a different tack.

"Well, you can't lock me up, Henry," he said grimly, glaring at the Marine sergeant. "I'm captain of a U. S. fruit steamer at a legal port of call. Besides that, I'm an American citizen, and the U. S. consul is an old friend of mine. I'll raise a rumpus you will remember to your dyin' day if you lock me up. I'd like to see you do it! You just try gettin' fresh with me an' see where you head in!"

"Well, I can lock you up, and I will," replied the Marine sergeant decisively. "And the Haitian government will back me up too, when they are told. You were trying to cart off Christophe's coin. Can't lock you up? Well, you just watch my smoke! You have been so cock-sure you were going to get off scot-free after raising all this disturbance, that I intend to teach you a lesson you had orter learned a long time ago. Being boss on your ship don't make you boss everywhere else you may happen to find yourself.

"All I started out to do was to have a little fun out of you and Big 'Un. To throw a good scare into you to sorter even up things for old times when I was your cabin boy. But now—well, just look at things a little and see where we stand. First, you were found in Christophe's citadel in the dead of the night, under very suspicious circumstances. Then if that wasn't enough, during your trial Big 'Un just about killed the justice of the peace, who also happens to be a general of division in the Haitian army, and aide de camp to the president. Rather serious offenses, if you ask me," added the Marine sergeant sweetly. "And while this was going on you generously pitched in and cleaned up all the civil guards in the court room. Then after that, to add insult to injury, you said things about the Marine Corps that would land you in a hospital anywhere in the United States. If any Marines happened to be around when you said it—"

"Who wouldn't say em!" retorted Captain Daugherty warmly. "Who wouldn't. You a white man, standin' there grinning' like—like a ape with the bellyache, an' me—"

"S'nough! Cut it out!" snapped the Marine sergeant. "Life's too short to argue with you. You'll stay locked up until I get back from the citadel. After that we'll see. Here, Frank! Put these men in our brig. Feed 'em and take good care of 'em till I get back. If they act ugly, hard-boil 'em!"

While the Marines were leading the crestfallen treasure hunters to the Marine guard-house through the chattering, excited throng of village negroes, suddenly from far away came the faint throbbing, muttering roll of the tom-toms. The sound came nearer, clearer, seemingly all about them in the air. And, as suddenly as the sound had come, just as suddenly silence fell on the noisy crowd, as if they had been stricken dumb.

The muffled vibration which was seemingly everywhere, yet was nowhere, continued. Furtively, inquiringly, each negro in the crowd looked at his neighbor. Then, with a watchful eye on the Marines, a few on the outskirts of the crowd slunk away. Others followed, then more, and then there wasn't any crowd. They were gone. If Captain Daugherty and Big 'Un had looked back across the street before entering the guard-house which had obligingly swung open for them, they would have seen the erstwhile belligerent general of division and some time justice of the peace lifting his sore and battle-scarred, bony frame on to the back of a rough-haired Haitian pony. Then he also, with a watchful eye on the Marines, rode away in an ambling canter toward the distant purple-blue mountain. For that short, sullen, muttering bark of the voodoo drum, which had now ceased as abruptly as it began, was a summons for the faithful. And the general, for all of his brave gold braid, his rattling saber, and his well rounded periods, was always among those present when the faithful were gathered together.

The Marine sergeant swore softly to himself as he watched from the window of his barracks the inhabitants of the village sneak off in the brush in answer to the summons of the voodoo drum. He even kept a watchful eye on his colored gendarmes. They were too well disciplined to take French leave and follow after its throbbing call; but he could see that they were restless and ill at ease.

The sergeant knew by long experience that the beating of the witch's drum always boded evil. But he never knew in what shape the evil would come. It might mean the stealing of a child from some village by that branch of the *mamaloi* organization known as the *loup-garous*—child stealers—for the sacrifice of the goat without horns—child. Or it might be the forerunner of a new insurrection of the Cacos; or merely an invitation to the faithful followers of voodoo to participate in a two weeks' dancing debauch in some hidden cave or forest rendezvous in the far hills. From which some of his own men, the colored gendarmes, would return irritable, red-eyed, sodden and sullen, of no manner of use for several days. So, with an anticipatory sigh, the sergeant girded up his loins by strapping on his service automatic, and with a final caution to the guards as to the safe-keeping of the prisoners, he set out with two men for Christophe's citadel.

"Well, anyhow, Capen," commented Big 'Un cheerfully when their dinner was brought in just as the sergeant departed, "well, anyhow us gits to eat, an' dis here chow ain't bad."

But the Scotch in Captain Daugherty's make-up prevented him from entering whole-heartedly into Big 'Un's racial cheerful philosophy. "No, it ain't to say bad, Big 'Un," the captain admitted grudgingly. He was eating grimly and determinedly. "But how about poor Joe and Slim? It's about all I can do to eat, hungry as I am, when I think about them bein' down there in that there well or dungeon or whatever it is. Big 'Un, if we don't get 'em out of there pretty soon they'll die down there. No food, no water. An' I can't go back to Galveston an' tell sich a tale as that. I might as well be dead myself."

"Capen, don't you worry none," encouraged Big 'Un. "Ain't Slim got one of dem *papalaw* he-witches down dere wid him? Well, den! dat *papalaw* he ain't goin' to put his ownself in no place what he can't git out of. Just you eat and be easy. Slim said we was in no way to worry, an' not to say ary word about dem bein' down in dat well, no matter what happened. An' anyhow," concluded Big 'Un cheerfully, "here we is locked up, good and tight. What kin we do? Let's us jest go ahead an' eat, while de eatin' is good."

That night, when the moon hung low and was partly hidden behind a dense mass of cloud, and while a freshening breeze came down from the hills as a forerunner of the dawn, the key of the Marine guard-house turned softly in the lock. Captain Daugherty and Big 'Un, who were democratically sharing the one shuck mattress their *de luxe* cell afforded, were awakened by a fumbling hand groping over their faces.

"Hist! Hist!" warned a sibilant whisper, "Hist! Hist! Rise you, and away come. Fear you do not. Safe all is. I am only a little English spoken. Here a writing from him in the citadel of Christophe is. Follow softly and escape."

They were soon ready, all but Captain Daugherty's swollen and suffering feet that refused to go into his shoes. So the leg-sore seaman tottered shoeless after Big 'Un and their guide out of the velvety darkness of their cell into the semi-twilight of the village's one street to find sturdy Haitian ponies saddled and waiting.

Their guide lost no time, but handing Captain Daugherty the writing referred to, assisted him to mount. Then he jumped on his own pony and motioned for them to follow. Hard riding for the rest of the weary night, which added saddle galls to sore legs and swollen feet, brought them to Cap Haitien.

AFTER Captain Daugherty had descended slowly and gingerly from his saddle and rubbed life into his benumbed legs and knees, he was able to hobble out on the wharf and glimpse the *Maggie May* at her anchorage. The sun was now showing up over the mountains, and he gazed at the dinky little fruit steamer with a sort of ecstatic worshipful joy. He thought, with a pang of regret, how many times he had referred to her as "that there old tub" or "that there derned old water-broke tin lizzie." But during this first blissful moment of his sight of her, he would not have traded the *Maggie May* even terms for the *Leviathan.* Big 'Un was likewise gazing rapturously at the *Maggie May.*

From where they stood they could even make out Bill and George moving about the deck, giving her the morning wash-down. Then they saw the cook emerge from the galley and walk toward the companionway with a tray in his hands, on which was a coffee pot. That was too much. Cupping his hands, Big 'Un yelled across the water:

"Hey, Cookie! Fix us some, too! Me an' de Capen is on our way, soon as we kin git a boat to fetch us out!"

They turned to their guide. He and the horses had faded out of the picture while the two homesick seamen were viewing the old homestead.

While Big 'Un was searching the waterfront for an early boat to take them out, Captain Daugherty remembered the note the guide had thrust into his hand as they left the Marine guard-house. He took it out of his pocket. In the fine, almost engraved, script handwriting of Slim he read:

> "Do not worry, my Captain. Be not disturbed. We be safe, Joe and I. Protect first yourself. Think not of us. We will promptly return. Mum is yet the word."

Captain Daugherty and Big 'Un did not exactly receive the welcome accorded the returned prodigal of holy writ. The mate, unaware of their arrival, came out on deck yawning and stretching. But he shut his jaws with a snap when he saw the two dilapidated derelicts who had just arrived, *via* the ship's ladder.

His superior officer stood there before him wearing a twelve-hour-old black eye graphically described as "a shiner," and a three days' budding crop of whiskers. One sleeve of his sea jacket had been torn away, and the shirt sleeve beneath was tattered and torn. His neck was blistered a deep red from sunburn, and that part of his face not concealed by beard, and the remains of the burnt-cork grease paint, was in the same sunburned condition as his neck. His trousers were rent behind. He was hatless, and in his hand he held his shoes. Big 'Un's shirt was practically gone. He, too, was hatless, and his trousers were torn from Genesis to Revelations. Across his broad chest were the dried blood traces of the unmanicured nails of the general of division, and one eye was closed.

A good mate is not supposed to have a sense of humor, and Mr. Shannon was a good mate. He did not laugh at the two wo-begone figures that stood before him. He did not even smile. His face showed little or no surprize; nor was there a welcome-home gleam in his eye.

"Where's the other two?" he asked shortly after a preliminary stare. "Comin' in on stretchers, I guess, from the looks of you two. I was that worried about you! Goin' off without a word as to where you was goin', or nothin'! After the second day when you didn't come back, I went over to Marine headquarters an' asked 'em to—sorter broadcast around for you. I thought maybe—"

"So it was you then who got us in all that trouble with them dern Marines!" exclaimed Captain Daugherty, dropping his shoes on the deck and stepping forward belligerently. "I might have knowd it! In this day and time, if you fergit to leave your mate exact and explicit orders, an' at that, it's better to write 'em down plain, frame 'em and hang 'em up over his bunk, why he is just as liable as not to fergit to go to bed or eat or somethin'. All mates' heads is good fer nowadays is to raise hair fer the barbers. Who told you we was lost or needed marines to help us run our business, may I ask?"

The mate inhaled the requisite amount of air into his lungs, and the battle was on.

"I guess in your day, when you was a mate on one of them there boats you tell about that—that had college educations, and could take their ownselves into port, unload, load and git out again without disturbin' the captain or the crew any, I suppose that in them days if the captain made a strange port, an' afore the mud hook got settled in the bay, would just disappear off the face of the earth with two of the crew, without sayin' a word, mind you! Nary a word as to where he was goin' or when he was comin' back. An' then after two or three days an' he didn't come back, I guess one of them finely eddicated mates of them times would have gone ashore an' hunted up a fortune-teller, or a crystal ball gazer an' found out where the captain an' the best part of the crew was havin' their shore leave. An' then when two or three cablegrams or radios came pourin' in from the home office, I guess—"

"Where is them cablegrams an' radios?" Captain Daugherty interrupted, "where air they?"

"Well," parried the mate rather lamely, "they could have come, couldn't they? Even if they didn't, they could have."

"That's neither here nor there," replied the captain airily, much relieved by this indirect information that nothing out of the ordinary had happened during his absence. "Them cablegrams an' radios *didn't* come. An' you hadn't orter set them Marines to huntin' fer us. I believe you done it a purpose to plague me. But right now I want some breakfast. Big 'Un, go hurry up that cook. Tell him to turn the hot water on fer a bath fer me. I want to get these here feet of mine doctored up a little and then I want to git some sleep; an' I'll thank you, Mr. Shannon, not to go an' git the Marines to wake me up in case I oversleep a little. Go on now, Big 'Un, an' git your ownself fixed up."

"Don't you worry none," muttered the mate as the captain hobbled toward the companionway, "I wouldn't wake you if you slept till the Day of Resurrection."

The captain stopped and turned around.

"What air you sayin', Mr. Shannon, if I may ask?" he inquired sweetly.

"Nothin'," replied the mate shortly. "Just talkin' to myself."

"I thought maybe you was speculatin' to yourself where we was at all this time." The captain's tone was confidential, almost winning.

"I was, sir, at that," replied the mate eagerly, walking right into the trap. "Tell me, where was you, an' where is Slim and Joe?"

THE hard lines of the captain's weather-beaten face smoothed out and a look of pleasurable satisfaction almost shone through the grease paint still on his face. This was his hour and he was enjoying it as much as his physical condition permitted.

"As I was saying," he continued, "I thought maybe that was what was eatin' you. An' I just wanted to say that I hope you will live till you find out; because if you do live that long, Methuselah will be a prattlin' babe by the side of you."

With this broadside raking the mate fore and aft, the captain limped away, with as dignified an air as the great rent in the seat of his trousers would allow, and disappeared down the companionway.

"Well, I don't have to live that long," the mate called joyously after him, as if the prospect of an early death gratified and pleased him. "I happen to already know where you was, an' how you got arrested an' all. An' I know who done it, too," he continued, raising his voice as the captain got farther away.

"It was Henry Smith, your old cabin boy, an' Henry phoned down here to me that he got more fun out of briggin' you than he would have got out of findin' Christophe's money that you all was chasin' over them mountains after. An' that ain't all," he yelled down the companionway, as he heard the captain's door slam. "Henry said he couldn't find Joe an' Slim, but that he'd be down here afore long after you an' Big 'Un, an' that you wouldn't find the Cap Haitien jail so easy to git out of either. So, now go soak your head an' feet both," the mate concluded, discreetly lowering his voice to a mutter. "I'm glad you got pinched. Maybe next time you won't be so close-mouthed an' tell me what you aim to do. I hope Henry comes down here and takes you both to jail."

Captain Daugherty was too tired, footsore and hungry to worry over a future arrest. Besides that, his moral courage had been restored the moment he had again set foot on the *Maggie May*. He was on his native heath so to speak, and was as brave as a country dog under his master's wagon. So he contented himself with swearing softly between his teeth at the mate while he removed his socks and tenderly caressed his lame and prostrated feet, until the cook came with his bath and his breakfast.

The cook's natural curiosity regarding the itineracy of the treasure hunters had been amply satisfied by Big 'Un's lurid recital, while the captain's breakfast had been preparing. So now he said nothing, but deftly assisted the captain to get out of his battle-torn clothes, found his bottle of liniment for him, and finally helped the groaning treasure hunter into his bunk, where he fell to sleep almost at once.

Evening had stolen down from the purple hills and an opalescent afterglow showed where the sun had gone down, before the captain appeared on deck. He looked shoreward where lights were beginning to twinkle here and there. Then he glanced fondly about the *Maggie May*. He even regarded with affection her weather-beaten funnels which sadly needed painting and were usually an eyesore to him. The mate and the two remaining A.B.'s of his crew were busy aft.

The cook and Big 'Un were nowhere to be seen, but a pleasant smell of cooking wafted to him from the galley by the shore breeze told him where they were. But Slim and Joe, how about them? Slim had written, "Don't worry about me, my Captain. I will return promptly."—but that did not solve the problem. To sail for home without them was unthinkable, but he could not wait many more hours. Something must be done about it, but what?

Must he lower his pride or worse, risk arrest by going to those vindictive Marines and have a thorough search made? He was sure the Marine sergeant, alias Henry Smith, his old cabin boy, would gladly welcome another chance to humiliate him by again arresting his old captain and brigging him for several days. And that would mean—it might cost him his captain's papers. Besides Slim had urgently cautioned against any publicity or interference. He would call the mate and discuss the matter with him. Maybe he could induce him to go to the Marines. Anyway, something must be done. He had already delayed the matter too long, but that morning he had been too tired and sleepy to have arranged for storing away a boatload of Christophe's treasure, even if he had found it.

The captain didn't have to call the mate, however. He looked up from his uneasy musings to see that worthy approaching with a colored lieutenant of gendarmes in his wake. On the mate's face was that self-satisfied "I told you so" expression that tempts one to commit justifiable homicide.

"Captain Daugherty, sir, here is one of them there Haitian cops, who insists that he has a warrant for your arrest. I couldn't fool him none. He seen you at once as he come on board, and p'inted you out as bein' the right man, so I had to bring him for'ard."

Illy repressing a grin, the mate stepped aside and allowed the dapper gold-braided young *gens de couleur* to occupy the center of the stage.

The gendarme saluted, and in fairly understandable broken English said:

"Sir, I have here a warrant for the arrest and detention of the captain of the *Maggie May,* a sheep of the United Company of Fruits."

He bowed low and handed the captain a ponderous, heavily sealed document of the general get-up and appearance of a treaty between nations.

The captain held out a hand to receive it, a hand that trembled slightly in spite of his efforts to control it; and he was just able to suppress a groan. Ruin and disgrace stared at him over the heavily epauletted shoulder of the pigeon-breasted gendarme. He was truly facing an unseemly end to a long and honorable career. He was quite sure the fruit company would never forgive him for getting into personal difficulties with the Haitian government. His troubles would naturally reflect on them and might prevent the company from securing the valuable franchises he had been sent to spy out for them.

All this ran swiftly through the captain's mind while the colored lieutenant of gendarmes stood smiling at him, and the mate openly snickering behind his hand. Then from somewhere, borne to them on the gentle, unceasing off-shore breeze, came the rolling throbbing bark of the tom-tom. Big 'Un, who had come out of the galley and was leaning over the rail, ostensibly watching the phosphorescent glow in the wake of a small school of fish but really regarding the captain out of the tail of his eye, started up at the sound.

His neck stiffened with superstitious fear, and a salty taste of nausea gathered in his mouth. The colored gendarme himself became vaguely uneasy at the sound. But Captain Daugherty was too busy crossing the bridges he was erecting along the road of misfortune upon which this adventure had set his feet, to be disturbed by all the tom-toms in Haiti. He fumbled vaguely with the seals of the warrant which the gendarme had given him, glancing furtively about him at the same time, as a wild idea of sudden flight occurred to him.

"Will the captain hasten and read," the gendarme suggested politely; and was that a wink? The captain stared at the gendarme. The wink was repeated. The captain drew a long breath and attacked the stubborn seals again.

"Better eat your supper, sir, before you go," suggested the mate with that same brand of kindly hospitality with which a keeper urges a condemned man to eat hearty of his last breakfast.

"I will, Mr. Shannon. Be good enough to tell the cook to serve it at once." And as the mate reluctantly walked away the captain broke the seals.

INSIDE the heavy envelope, and between thick blank sheets of paper, was a very small note in Slim's engraved script writing:

> My Captain, Joe and I are safe. Heed no one, but go out tonight with the tide. Wait not for us. Delay not. Go out with the tide. All will be well if you go out with the tide.

The captain read this with a leaping heart. Ten years rolled off his mind. He stood suddenly erect and breathed in the salty air joyously. He glanced at the gendarme who promptly winked again.

"Do you know the contents of this here envelope?" the captain asked anxiously.

"I do, sir," with great assurance.

"Heaven bless you!" breathed the captain fervently, pressing an American silver dollar into the surprized palm of the gendarme who smiled, saluted and turned to depart.

"Hold on!" the captain called after him. "How about that American Marine man that pinched—I mean arrested me yesterday. Where is he at?"

The gendarme grinned and placed his forefinger knowingly beside his nose.

"Gone has he hastily over the mountains. He has knowledge that a great uprising of Cacos is threatening there among the farthermost hills. He is too busy with these matters of importance to remember this one small arrest." The gendarme made an indescribable gesture in the air. "Those who cause that noise of the drums to be made, they have made sure that he would be busy with other things than this, thy arrest."

With a light laugh and another salute, the gendarme was gone down the ladder.

It was a different Captain Daugherty, or rather the old one returned, who stepped to the door of the little chart-room, from which vantage ground the mate had tried to overhear the conversation between the captain and the gendarme.

"Jim," the captain ordered, "go git me a pilot and the clearance papers. An' make it snappy. I'm goin' out tonight with the tide."

"What?" stammered the mate. "Ain't you, ain't you just been arrested?"

"You heard my orders, Mr. Shannon," the captain replied with great dignity. "Go git them papers an' hunt me up a pilot, a good one too, while I go down and tell McDonald to turn on the burners an' raise steam."

"But—where's Joe and Slim? They ain't showed up. Ain't you goin' to wait for 'em?"

"I should worry about Joe an' Slim. You go git them papers and the pilot. Don't chew the rag all day."

That night, as the *Maggie May* nosed her cautious way past the outer reef of Cap Haitien's open bay, where Columbus' flag-ship came to grief on that memorable Christmas eve, a small boat hailed her from the moonlit sea. Big 'Un ran to the side and bellowed a reply, while Captain Daugherty rang the engines down. Presently there came to them in Slim's precise and perfect English—

"It is I, Big 'Un; myself and Joe. Throw us a ladder."

In a few minutes the two were over the side. Without speaking they passed the gaping mate and went below, each carrying with a self important air a small woven willow bag, such as are used as nets by Haitian fishermen. They were followed by Big 'Un, and also by the captain as soon as he had the boat under way again, and had turned her over to the thoroughly mystified mate.

After the captain had admitted them to his cabin, and had shut and bolted the door, the two who had been missing turned to him with bright and happy faces.

"My Captain!" exulted Slim, "prepare a place for the gold! We have it here in these bags," and Slim lifted from the fishnets two old-fashioned shot bags that bulged suggestively.

The captain switched on his desk light and then Slim, with a due regard for dramatic effect, poured out the contents of the bags on the desk in a golden shower.

There was perfect silence for a few seconds while the four pairs of eyes gloated over the gold.

"Count it, my Captain," urged Slim at last arousing himself from his ecstasy. "Examine it! It is for the four of us! Share and share alike!"

The captain limped forward and putting on his glasses, looked curiously at the old coins. Here were the golden sovereigns of England, Napoleons from France, and double eagles from America. And among these, old Spanish doubloons, worth many times their face value for coin collector's chests.

"There is here only a small portion of Christophe's treasure," explained Slim. "The curious ball keys which I possessed opened only a small niche in the treasure house. You throw down a hole in the rock first one ball and then the other. And then, a small pole inserted in the hole you push with all your might, and then the seemingly solid rock gives way a space sufficient for one to creep into a tiny chamber beyond. Within this we found these bags and two others; two more key balls and the dried-up bodies of two men, murdered there by Christophe, after they had prepared the secret place for his treasure.

"Then Joe and I and the *papaloi* heard the shouting from above. So we crept to the opening into the dungeon and looked up, listening to all that was said. After you and the Marines had gone, the *papaloi* I had left to guard you returned and threw us down another rope-ladder. Then we came out quickly and fled to the cave in the hills; there we divided the treasure with the old *mamaloi*. Afterwards she caused the drum to be beaten, and there came then those who told us of your plight. She, the mama, then took steps to release you and to draw off this officer of Marines by getting the news to him of a great uprising of Cacos in the hills; this was easy, for even among those who serve well with the Marines, the *mamaloi* has followers bound to her body and soul.

"The rest you know," concluded Slim, "except to add that Joe here has borne himself, as a brave man should, standing by manfully. Doing as he was bidden to do in all things. He is a boy of whom to be proud."

"Well, I'm glad!" the captain beamed.

"Glad it all turned out so well. But look here, Slim! Me an' Big 'Un—we didn't do much. An'—"

Slim held up a protesting hand.

"You did what was your lot to do. So did the *mamaloi* and the *papalois*, to whom two of the sacks were given. We agreed to share and share alike. And it shall not be otherwise, eh, Joe, my friend?"

"Naw, of course not!" Joe answered with just the suspicion of a swagger as he hitched up his torn trousers. "The Cap'n and Big 'Un must have the same as us."

"All right, boys!" agreed the captain, both his conscience and Scottish thrift appeased at the same time. "An' now if you boys agree, we'll put this here gold together in the ship's safe till we make New Orleans; then we'll have it appraised by them experts down at the mint, or by some bankin' folks that had orter know what this here hundred-year-old money is worth. And then we'll share it. But until then, and afterwards, if you ask me, mum must be the word."

"Mum indeed should be the word," agreed Slim. "Back yonder the secret will be well kept by the *mamaloi* until I return for more gold." He held up a hideously carved ball of teakwood. "I have here one key, the old *mamaloi* the other one, just as it was before. She never dies. Therefore she will be there waiting for me when I return for the rest of the treasure. In which," he added politely, "I hope you, my friends, will also share."

"What is your idea to do with all that money, Slim?" the captain asked.

A dreamy, wistful look came over his finely featured bronze face.

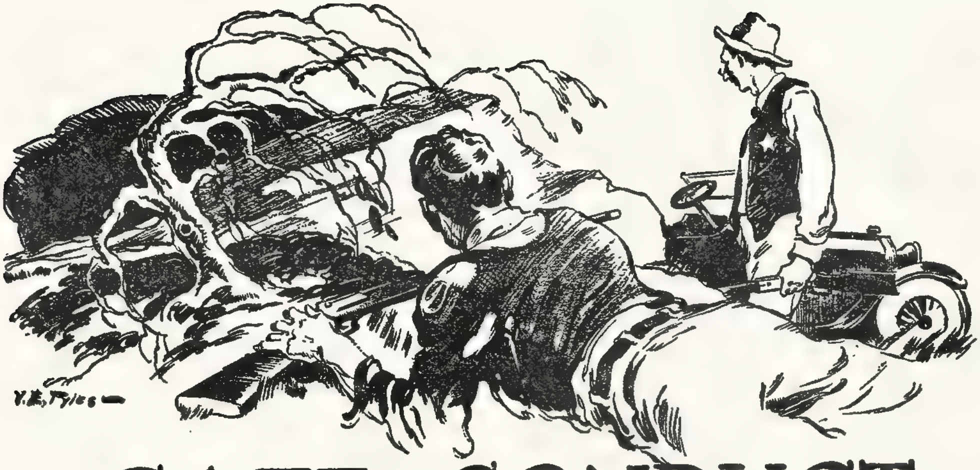
"Some day the Marines will depart from Haiti, leaving the country to govern herself again. And then—" He drew himself proudly up, his face set in determined lines, "and then I will return there. With this gold which I intend placing in an American bank to draw interest against that day, I will return. With these golden soldiers to fight for me I will win my way to the throne of my ancestor, the great Christophe. It was for this purpose, to keep those of his house on the throne that he stored away this gold. Therefore in the spirit land he will rise up to help me. Christophe, proud and arrogant, offended the *papalois* and *mamalois*, and therefore they struck him down in his prime. But I—I will be different. I will be the friend of those who serve the Sacred Snake. I will restore the old citadel. I—" he checked himself abruptly and turned to Joe, "what will you do with your share, Joe, my friend?"

"Shucks!" exclaimed Joe, thoroughly embarrassed and self-conscious as he realized that Slim had skillfully read his thoughts, "I'll—I'll put mine in a savings bank till I git grown. An' then I'll buy me a ship, an' hire me some gold diggers, an' come back here an' dig up Cap'n Kid's money that them *papalois* say is buried on Tortuga Island 'cross from Haiti. That's what I'm goin' to do with mine. How about you, Big 'Un?"

"Me?" asked Big 'Un looking with glistening eyes at the pile of gold, "well, ifen I kin keep dat woman of mine frum findin' out I has got it, I means to take my money Christmus an' go to Mexico an' hunt up dat Mexican dat stole back dat rooster from us all. An' when I finds him, I means to buy back dat bird or steal him back, ifen hit takes de last dime."

They all looked expectantly at Captain Daugherty, who seeing what was expected of him, drew a reminiscent sigh and said:

"Well, boys, I'm gittin' old, an' most of my old pep is done gone. I guess I'll just put mine in the Seamen's Bank, unbeknownst to my wimmen folks, and watch her grow. But I know one thing! Honest, I'd give every red cent of it, every dinged dime just to have that dad-blamed cocksure dandified Henry Smith of them Marines back here on the *Maggie May* as cabin boy, for just one voyage. I think in that time I could put the fear of God in his soul for the rest of his life. Now, let's all turn in."



SAFE CONDUCT

by Barry Scobee

Author of "No Law," 'Native Born," etc.

NOLLY RODGERS liked to insinuate boastfully around the night fires of the blanket-stiffs and hoboes that he had committed robbery and theft in every county of California, and escaped detection.

Nolly was almost a genius—almost. Hiding behind a suave and plausible manner, he had wandered up and down the State for years, living on the fat of the land, fleeing back to the Sierra Nevada after his crimes, and laughing up his sleeve at the law.

But Nolly's foot had slipped. He had held up a mine paymaster near his home region three nights before and had been unexpectedly pursued by the irate miners, driven to a mountain-side, and now was posse-hunted and posse-pressed for the first time in his career.

The fugitive lay in some bushes on a little knoll, parched by the noon sun, his clothing stiff with sweat and dust, desperately ready to poke his rifle out and fire at any passing man-hunter who should start up the knoll to investigate.

His keen ears caught the sound of a laboring car on the steep, rough road below, and in a moment a steaming flivver appeared around a hairpin bend with one man in it. He stopped the car and peered around. Beside the road, at the foot of the knoll, were three or four scraggly trees. The driver turned in under them, shut off his motor, and got out.

It was a man that Nolly knew, by sight—Sheriff Winkles of Cotati County.

And even under the circumstances an amused and scornful smile flicked across Nolly's unshaven face.

For a story had just been going the rounds of the newspapers at Winkles' expense that had set the whole State to grinning.

The story had been born of the sheriff's practise of poking through the freight trains, when they stopped at his town of Busneyville, for hoboes and the like, and giving them their choice of going to jail or to work in the fields. In this process he had caught by chance a mail and express car bandit wanted all the way from Chicago to Los Angeles and for whom rewards totaling a small fortune had been offered.

And the simple old sheriff had let him loose. The man had talked Winkles into it with a yarn about the charges being an injustice and the pictures in the papers a terrible mistake. The bandit, recaptured two days later by another sheriff, had told on Winkles with many details and sly allusions to his own cleverness.

"If I have to get captured," thought Nolly, "wish I could get captured by a simp like that."

Winkles stretched and scanned the vicinity. He was middle sized, wore loose khaki trousers, gingham shirt, and a stained derby hat. He took a long drink from a waterbag on the side of the car and, setting a basket on the ground, began to eat sandwiches as he walked about, idly watching.

The water and food tempted Nolly almost beyond endurance. He thought of sneaking down and filching the bag and basket when Winkles' back was turned. And might have tried it but two posse-men with rifles and revolvers came out of the brush and approached the sheriff.

Nolly caught some of the talk, but not all, for the wind was whisping noisily over his refuge of bushes. The mine bandit was inside the ring somewhere, the posse-men averred, and the ring was tightening fast. Nolly's blood ran cold, though he had been well aware of the fact since in the night, when he had been fired upon, before hiding here on the knoll.

The sheriff of Cotati explained that he had mosied up, thinking he might have luck enough to get his hands on Nolly Rodgers for the Busneyville bank robbery of ten days previous.

"Nothing doing," asserted one of the others. "He's our meat. Inside an hour our gang'll be raking through here like a forest fire. Won't even a cricket get out between us."

Nolly's blood went colder yet. He did not crave the glory of a courageous last stand. He preferred freedom in which to spend his stolen money. There was little comfort in seeing the pair of man-hunters go on; more were close.

Nolly had never worried much about getting into tight places. His philosophy was that if you were in you could always get out by thinking hard until you thought of some slick trick. In such a manner he had escaped from many a tight corner.

And now, in his desperation, an idea did come to him. It tensed his body, made his eyes gleam—the slickest, greatest inspiration of his life.

Go down and let Winkles capture him and use his authority to escort him safely through the tightening circle!

And afterward talk himself out of Winkles' custody or escape by some other ruse.

Winkles had a hundred miles of mostly wild country to drive through to his home town. There would be plenty of opportunity to outwit the old fellow.

Oh boy, what a clever stunt! Chancey, sure, but absolutely the only way. And if he made it work—cleverest thing ever pulled!

Nolly planned swiftly. He'd sneak down as if to steal the water and food. That would make it all seem natural. And leave his rifle and pistol up here. It would be much better to be taken without arms. Sort of be a testimony to his innocence and well-meaning.

He raised himself slightly and scanned the mountain-side. In the course of the forenoon he had seen a dozen man-hunters. But none appeared to be in sight now.

He crawled from under the madrona bush and made his way downward stealthily, moving only when the sheriff was turned the other way.

In a brief time he was on a level with Winkles, and he went easing forward. Winkles was about six steps in front of the car, his back to it. Nolly passed the basket of food, his nostrils twitching. On his knees, he reached to the side of the car, by the rear door, and unhooked the wet water-bag.

He drank, gulped. Wouldn't Winkles ever turn and see him? He stopped for breath. Yes, the sheriff was turning now. Nolly got the water to his lips again.

"Hey!" A surprized ejaculation.

Nolly jerked the bag down in pretended alarm. Rehung it on the machine in one motion and threw up his arms in surrender.

"Nolan Rodgers!" exclaimed Winkles, coming nearer. "Why, he ain't even got a gun. Nolly, I arrest ye for the bank robbery."

Nolly had no intention of committing himself in this matter. He twisted away from the subject.

"Had to have water," he panted, to show how hard pushed he was.

"Where's your guns?"

"Guns?" echoed Nolly. "I got no guns. They just *think* I held up the mine. But it's all the same with me. They'd shoot or hang me on sight. I wish, now that you've got me, you'd take me outa here, Mister Winkles."

"Hmm, I reckon I will."

Without bothering to arm himself by drawing his rifle from its scabbard slung outboard from the steering wheel, he dug around in the bottom of the tonneau and lifted out a bright and shiny—and modern, Nolly perceived—pair of handcuffs.

"Hate to put these on a man," murmured the sheriff apologetically. "But—maybe I'd better do it."

SO DANGLING from the cuffs was a length of light but strong chain. Nolly had seen such before—an extra length to connect with anklets, or for securing a prisoner to a saddle or vehicle. Sometimes an improvisation by a Western sheriff. It gave Nolly an idea.

"Wait," he said. "You'd better lock me to the car. Keep those wild miners from taking me. They can't tell an innocent man when they see one. Won't listen to reason."

He had gone around and climbed into the front seat.

"Run that long chain through the steering wheel," he said.

"Good idear," agreed Winkles. "Plumb bright."

He handed the steels to Nolly, who thought of one more point:

"Sure you got the key to 'em?" he asked. "Case we go into a ditch, so you can let me loose."

Winkles ran the chain through his fingers to the end, and there, fastened with a bit of rawhide, was a tiny key. The officer began to fumble at it.

"I ain't much on this sheriffin' business," he declared. "Waan't sawed out o' sheriff timber. Elected by chance—what they call a political accident. Got a weakness again' handling men severe like a sheriff oughta handle 'em."

The thong and key came off. He poked them into a pocket of his unbuttoned, sagging vest and proceeded to place the handcuffs, not neglecting to put the chain through the steering wheel and hook the end link on a finger off the cuff. The chilled steel circles snapped around Nolly's wrists, so that nothing short of the key or a man with tools could remove it.

For the first time in three days Nolly experienced something of relief and security. But it was momentary. The posse was yet to pass.

"Hope we don't stop to talk with anybody," he suggested. "I don't like an argument."

"A man after my own heart!" Winkles exclaimed. "In that respect."

He went looking about to see that all his belongings were in the car ready for departure.

"And that's just what I told 'em when they wanted me to run," he resumed his plaint where he had left off. "Says I, 'You've got six or eight men in the sheriff's race now that you surely can pick suitable from. What's the use of stirring me out into trouble and heckling?' But my neighbors knew I was strong for protecting the small neighborhood irrigation against the encroachments of a big project, knew it took a sheriff that was in-ti-mately inter-rested to succeed, so they put me up, whether or no.

"And once I'd been heard to make a fool crack about if I was sheriff I'd comb the freight trains and turn the bums over to the farmers for field hands. Well, that got noised around, and with the ranchers always needing hands for something or other, they up and elected me and told me to go to it."

Winkles bent and cranked and climbed in. He waited until he had got back into the rough road before resuming his talk.

"Well, there I was slung into the ring, an' me no more fit for sheriffin' than—than your teeth is for gnawing of them handcuffs. So—now who's that?"

Two men were waving for the car to stop. Winkles kept on. They brought guns up threateningly. Winkles stopped.

"Posse-men?" he asked.

"We sure are."

"Well, boys, your work is over. I got the robber."

The men gaped at the perspiring Nolly. Winkles lifted his loose vest and displayed a silver star that bore the words, Sheriff of Cotati County, Cal. The men stepped back respectfully.

"Fire your guns and call the posses in," he said, and drove on.

"Hope that's the last," murmured Nolly, mopping his face with his shirt sleeve.

But it wasn't. A little farther on they came in sight of a line of men across the road and in the brush on either side, seven or eight of them. Nolly knew it for what it was—a segment of the human circle that had been closing in on him—and shuddered.

The men nearest the road waved their guns, and Winkles brought the flivver to a stop again. He displayed his star to the first two men to come up.

"I'm going out," he said casually. "Leavin' you."

"Who's this you got chained?"

"The robber. I got him up here. Takin' him to Busneyville on the bank robbery charge."

"Not by a long shot, you ain't! Not till he tells us, anyhow, where he hid that twenty thousand bucks he swiped."

"I'll say not!" another posse-man added.

Others came crowding up now, peering at Winkles and Nolly from their sweaty, unshaven faces. The first ones told the others. There was an excited buzz of talk, of protest and oaths. Winkles waited for it to subside. Then he spoke.

"Boys, I got the law on my side. I got the man in my custody. I'm going to give him safe conduct out o' here. If you interfere there'll be trouble."

The men were not organized to resist an officer and seize a prisoner. Given five minutes to talk it over and get together, they might have attacked. Winkles knew this. He speeded up his motor. The man-hunters stood back grudgingly, glaring at Nolly. Winkles drove on.

Nolly swiped his face again with his sleeve. Safe conduct! Sweetest words he had ever heard. Winkles muttered—

"Reckon they could of made more trouble than I could."

In a short time they entered a much traveled road and presently came in sight of a grove of great cottonwood trees and two or three buildings. Over the door of the largest structure was a sign painted in black letters.

FITZWATER'S STORE

U. S. Post-Office

Winkles drew up under the trees and got out.

"Want to phone the sheriff o' this county that I've got you, Nolly," he explained. "Phone the mine, too."

As he disappeared in the dark doorway of the store, three young fellows, eating cheese and crackers in the shade and hearing this, got up and came to the car. They had cartridge belts and rifles.

"How'd old Winks happen to catch you?" asked one.

"He's nobody's fool," answered Nolly.

"If he don't let you loose like he did that other guy."

The trio laughed.

"Any more posse-men beyond here?" asked Nolly.

"No, they're all back up there where you come from except us. We had to come down to get some props under our ca'tridge belts."

So the road was clear. Nolly's great safe conduct idea had worked like a charm. Nothing to do now but play a game with a simple old man.

After what seemed a longer time than necessary, Winkles returned, followed by the storekeeper for a peep at the prisoner. As the car started off one of the youths called tauntingly.

"Don't turn this man loose, Sheriff Winks!"

Nolly saw the old man flush under his tan; but that was his only response.

Now that the strain was over, Nolly felt his weariness ten-fold. He sagged down in the seat and rested and dozed, while the car spun out its miles. Then gradually he revived, feeling pretty well. Just a simple game with a simple sheriff. He wished that the stubble was off his face and that he had fresh, soft clothes. He remembered the food and asked for it.

"Sure," said the kindly Winkles, reaching back for the basket. "Help yourself."

The chain through the steering wheel did not keep Nolly from eating with both hands like a starved man.

"Filling?" asked the old man when his guest showed signs of slowing.

"I'll say. You sure got a cook at your house."

"Jail cook. Reckon I oughta offered it to you sooner—say!"

Chagrin came over the wrinkled visage.

"Say—I forgot to show you the warrant too. I ain't much on this sheriffin' business for a fact."

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Winkles."

"But I like to do things right. Maybe it'll make some difference about holding you for trial. If it do the people are going to find fault with me. They been doing that, harsh. And besides, you've been arrested a whole lot likely and will think I'm pretty green and crude."

Nolly flashed a reproachful look but it was apparently lost on his companion.

"But I got some excuse for being crude," the Cotati officer went on. "I don't like sheriffin'—hate to flaunt my authority, and warrants, and turn the key on people in jail. Got a weakness against it."

Nolly finished with the basket and set it back. Conversation dropped off. The miles slid by swiftly. Nolly was in no hurry. Many a mile of empty country was yet ahead. He began to assemble a working plan from the many suggestions that had been coming to his mind. He decided to gain his freedom at Wheat Stop, a lonely siding twenty-five miles from Busneyville, where the wagon road crossed the railroad. There he could take his choice between escaping on a train or into the adjacent mountain wilds. But he must not go any farther than Wheat Stop; for beyond the siding were ranches and people to interfere with escape.

WINKLES' next conversation started with an exclamation of alarm.

"Say! Say, I forgot to question you about the twenty thousand from the mine paymaster. If I ain't a sheriff though! That's what the mine bookkeeper kept saying on the phone. Didja—something or other. I couldn't catch what on account of the buzzing. Didja get the money? is what he meant. Where is it, Nolly?"

"Mr. Winkles," answered Nolly solemnly. "I didn't take any money. I didn't stage that holdup. Was just passing through the country when first thing I knew they had me surrounded."

"Umm—well, where's the ten thousand you grabbed from the Busneyville bank? Know what our people are aiming to do? Give you ten years for it—a thousand dollars a year. Where's it at, Nolly?"

"I don't know." Nolly was plaintive. "I didn't rob that bank, either. Not by myself, that is. Didn't have the money in my mitts two minutes. Two men forced me with loaded guns to do what I done."

Winkles took his eyes off his driving long enough to give Nolly a startled glance.

Nolly grinned inside. For he had the bank money, as well as the mine payroll, safely buried where he could get it when the hue and cry subsided. The Busneyville lone-hand job had been his first really important one, the climax of years of petty work. It had gone well until the girl bookkeeper snatched at his blue bandana mask. His face had been partly exposed and no doubt the warrant was the result of his being recognized. But he had got away, and while lying low in the Sierras had heard of the mine money and gone after it, with the intention of getting it and fading out of the country for a few years. A night watchman had been the cause of his cake turning to dough.

"You see," Nolly went on, "I was hanging around your town waiting to go on a job I'd been promised."

"Uh-huh."

"Loafing in front of the rest'runt three four doors from the bank when two men came along and wanted to know if I would just step into the bank and be a witness to some kind of paper for them."

Nolly doubted that the sheriff was hearing this, for he had a far-away look in his eyes. He spoke a little more emphatically.

"So I stepped off with them, but when they got to the door they stuck pistols in my ribs—"

Nolly stopped. Winkles did not know that he was being talked to. Two or three miles slipped past, then he spoke as if all the while he had been listening to his prisoner's tale of woe.

"Reminds me," he said, "of a story I heard t'other day— You hear 'em back there at the store tell me not to turn you loose like I did that other guy? Know what they meant?"

"No," lied Nolly.

"They had ref'rence to a prisoner I let go a few days back. Quite a noted man, it turned out. Papers tryin' to make out like he was a slicker and out-talked me. But he was sick, for a fact. And he told me how he had been persecuted. Made a misstep in youth and the police wouldn't let him be. Oh well, I turned him loose. Didn't have the heart to lock him up. I've got a weakness that way."

And before Nolly could launch himself again, the sheriff of Cotati added—

"They've condemned me and laughed at me a lot for that. Maybe I can redeem myself by taking you in."

Nolly's mind was tweaked with the thought that the game was not so simple as he had supposed. He suddenly saw his story as crude, knew he must change his tactics.

"Thought maybe when you saw how I'd been tricked," he ventured persuasively, "you'd turn me loose, sheriff."

"Turn you loose!" Winkles started, as

if fearful of persuasion, then calmed immediately. "I couldn't do that," he said.

"Thought when I surrendered back there, thought I, here's a man who gives his fellow men a square deal."

"Am inclined that way, Nolly. 'Spect it shows on me. But I can't turn you loose."

There was no grim setting of the jaw in refusal, no hostility or emotion—just a plain, mild statement. It did not forbid pleading, did not exclude argument. Yet there was something so final that it sent a cold chill down Nolly's back.

At this moment the car topped a ridge that came down from the mountains like a great root, and in the distance, at the foot of a long, easy grade lay Wheat Stop. The siding was discernible by a string of boxcars, looking at this distance like one solid object. It startled Nolly, for he had not realized that they were so near. There was no time to lose now. He turned to the old man with a small-sized panic stirring in him.

"Listen, dad, I haven't told you the truth. I've made a misstep in my youth, too, and have been hounded. But those two men didn't force me to help rob the bank. I was willing."

"Yeah?"

"And we hid the money together. I know where it is."

"You do?" Winkles brightened. "I'd like to take it in with me."

"It'd sure be a feather in your cap. Tell you, if you'll let me go—swap me for the cash—I'll draw you a map so you can go straight to the place. Just pull up when we get to Wheat Stop and unlock these cuffs."

But Winkles shook his head, just shook his gray old head under his dust-stained derby, not stubborn, but somehow terribly final.

"You don't like the map idea?" Nolly pressed.

"Never thought much of 'gold' maps," confessed Winkles.

"Tell you, Mr. Winkles, I can take you in person. Unlock these things at Wheat Stop. The stuff is only a few miles back in the hills. We can get there and back to the road by sundown."

This was not true. The bank loot was buried a half day's ride from Wheat Stop. But Nolly thought that if he just got into the mountain wilds without the steel on his wrists, escape would be easy.

"How about your two pardners?" he asked. "Like as not they've dug up the stuff by now."

Nolly was taken in the web of his own weaving. Why had Winkles seemed so hickish when he wasn't? Nolly took his frantic gaze from the sheriff of Cotati long enough to look ahead. Wheat Stop was coming to them on a magic ribbon. His manacled hands came up in a plea to the old man.

"Listen, dad, I've lied to you. I robbed the bank by myself. And that's straight. I can lead you to the cache. Just unlock these things and turn me loose."

"I can't turn you loose, Nolly."

THE car was flying down the smooth road. Wheat Stop was so near that the separate box cars were discernible. To Nolly's alarmed mind they suggested a wall with prison behind. Prison! The heart of the sneak thief—the heart and the brand of courage in him that had robbed little cross-road stores or masked and held up lone farm men or women returning home with butter-and-egg money—was turning to water at the thought of prison cells. His frantic hands seized Winkles by the arm.

"Listen, the bank ain't in the man business. It's in the money business. They'd rather have you take back the ten thousand than me."

"You're right, son, I expect."

"Then unlock these things. Turn me loose."

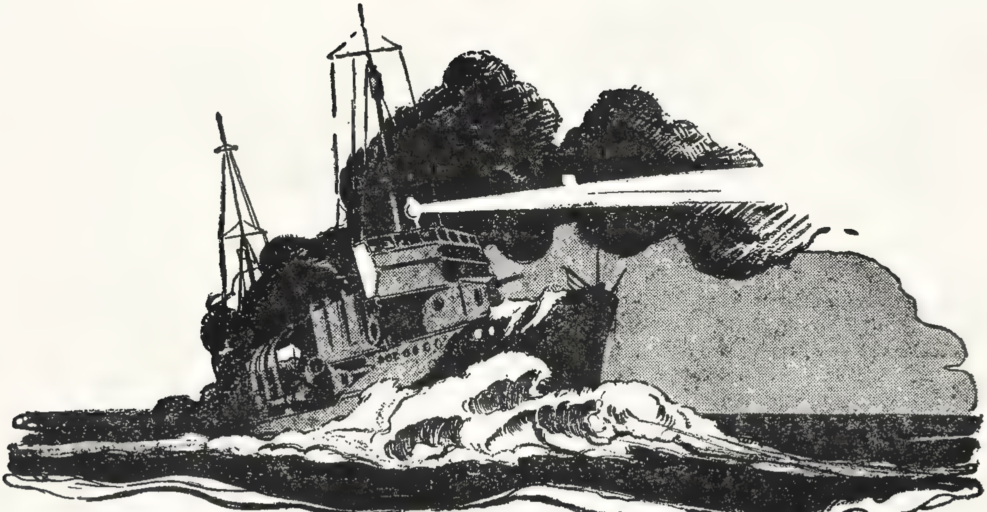
"I can't do that."

"Why can't you? Listen!" Nolly was pawing now. "I'll lead you straight there. You're armed. You can make me go. It's in a burlap sack; buried in a good dry place. Not a cent missing. We'll count it. Run it through our fingers. Take it to the bank. They'd rather have it than me. And it will make the world laugh out of the other side of its mouth about you letting that mail car bandit loose."

The old man's countenance lighted up, so that Nolly thought he had won at last. The car began to slow down for the crossing.

"Here, this is the place," Nolly urged, tugging at the sheriff's arm. "Here, park right here."

"But I can't, son," old Winkles said once more. "I can't unlock you. I ain't got the key to the handcuffs. You see, I knew my weakness of letting men loose; and back there at Fitzwater's post-office I mailed that little key to Busneyville."



ROUTINE*

by Vance H. Morris

MIDNIGHT—a black, cold midnight in December. Only one thing was lacking to make a perfect setting for an old-fashioned melodrama—a storm. Instead, something strange for Bay of Biscay weather, the sea was calm, with a long, easy ground-swell running that seemed to intensify a feeling of heavy weather in the near future. Not a breath of wind stirred to mar the mirror-like surface of the water. A haze hung low, which made a poor visibility poorer.

Now and then a sudden streak of bluish light marked where a madly racing porpoise broached. Glancing aft toward the wake, the officer of the deck on the U. S. S. *Percival* could dimly discern the stern, showing ghostly black against the faint blue light of the phosphorescence disturbed by the propellers.

Off to the starboard a faint line of light marked the position of the nearest destroyer, one mile away. Stretched out on a line of twelve miles extent were the twelve destroyers of escort group five, "Sims' Circus," out of Brest, France, westbound for a convoy of troop-ships. The *Percival* was the most southerly of this line, being guide ship on the port wing.

An old destroyer was the *Percival*, famous for her rolling and pitching abilities. One of the first of her class in the U. S. Navy, she was proving her worth in the hardest sort of service any naval vessel had ever been called upon to perform, guiding and guarding massive troop-ships through the submarine-infested waters in every kind of weather, day in and day out, always ready to live up to the boast that "destroyers of the U. S. N. are not afraid of dirty weather." Hard, cruel work it was, both on the men of her crew and on the ship herself.

But even the *Percival*, with all her fame as a rough-riding ship, was rolling along with an easy motion that night. Down in the compartments, tired and sleepy men, worn out by day after day of standing watches with nerves all keyed up to the breaking point, slept heavily, thanking their stars and the god of fools and destroyer men for a night of comparative ease. From the hatches rose a chorus of snores, punctuated now and then by one more heavy and ripping than usual. After one of these whole-souled bursts of sound had ceased resounding, a seaman of the stand-by gun crew remarked:

"Those birds below are sure makin' up for lost time. Listen to that guy snorin'— He better snap out of it before he chokes hisself."

"You tell 'em, boy," another seaman answered. "Wonder what's keepin' Ike?

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* *An Off-the-Trail Story; see footnote on first contents page.*

We could sure use a bunch of that hot Java in the galley now. Lord, but it's cold."

They had just come on watch and mustered at the port waist gun, while the chief boatswain's mate, Ike, had climbed to the bridge to report to the O. D. the relief of the watch. Ike came sliding down the ladder from the bridge and silently motioned the waiting crew into the galley. In they tumbled to draw steaming bowls of coffee, find warm corners to squat in and make themselves comfortable until such time as they were needed.

"Ain't she rollin' pretty tonight?" remarked Charlie, the gunner's mate. "Even Red, the Q. M. ain't seasick fer once."

"Wonder where that bird is," asked Ike. "He didn't muster with the watch. Bet he's crawled into the hawser chest aft to keep from goin' on watch. It 'u'd be just like him to do it."

"Naw—I called him myself. He was in his bunk," Charlie answered. "That guy ought to be on the battle-wagons. He gets sick too easy on these boats."

Some one came stumbling into the galley, gave a wild whoop and fell.

"Who in —— is that?" asked Ike petulantly.

"It's only that slewfooted bunting tosser, Red," answered a seaman disgustedly.

"What's the matter with yu, can't yu stand up?" asked Ike. "You're a —— of a destroyer man. I never did see a flag-ripper that wasn't dumb, anyhow."

"Dumb? Dumb? Say, bud," retorted Red, "if you had on size twelve sea-boots, yu wouldn't be so cocky about standin' up yourself."

"How come yu got 'em so big?"

"Well, when I got to where the 'Iron Duke' was issuin' 'em out, all he had left after fittin' out you and the rest of your bunch of swabs, was twelves. He says to me, 'take 'em. They'll give yer feet a chanct to grow.' I got six pairs of wool socks on now, an' yet the —— things is too big. Every time I gets 'em off on a straight course one of 'em tacks an' I flop. Gimme the Java."

A SEAMAN reluctantly passed over a bowl of coffee and Red drank hurriedly.

"That's good Java tonight. Guess the cook fergot to boil his socks in it," he remarked.

"If yu hadn't been sleepin' when the word was passed to draw boots, yu might have got a decent pair," said Charlie. "You Q. M.'s got the Navy like yu want it. Sleepin' every mornin' until chow comes down, then sleep some more. Pretty soft!"

"Soft ——! We work more'n any gang on this wagon. If it wasn't fer us, the ship 'u'd sink. I don't see you showin' much ambition along about reveille. How d'yu get that way? You gun-greasers find funny ideas in them 600 W cans of yours."

"If it wasn't fer you guys," chimed in Ike disgustedly, "if it wasn't fer you guys the ship 'u'd sink! I never heard of any guy what was any use gettin' a wheel plastered on his arm. Any loose gear we has bumpin' around on deck we puts in the signal gang an' rates a Q. M."

"That's right, rave on," said Red. "From the bright an' shinin' lights you bosun blokes put on the helm, all the dumbness on this wagon ain't in the signal gang. Half your gang of deck swabs can't even steer a course."

"Yeh? Well, you got lots of room to talk. You're a crack helmsman yourself ain't yu?" said Ike peevishly. "Who tried to put us ashore on Petit Minou last time in? Who did, I ask yu?"

"Well," said Red, "that's different. There's a funny set to the current there."

"'Salright. You'd have an alibi anyhow. Gimme cigaret."

"Wait a minute till I light up. I got a Fatima. Save yu butts."

"Where did yu get a Fatima?" asked Ike suspiciously. "We ain't had mail fer two trips now. What yu been doin'? Holdin' out on us? Just like you signal fluzzies. Any time you birds open up your hearts, the world knows it."

"There yu go again," said Red. "One more wise crack like that last one an' there ain't gonna be no butts. Naw, I ain't been holdin' out on yu. I swiped this offa the wardroom table when I called the skipper yesterday. Some officer got generous as —— an' left it layin' there."

Red lighted the cigaret and puffed it with all evidence of enjoyment. Ike watched for a moment and then burst out with:

"Come on, guy, come on! That's butts now. Another drag an' she'll be a lip-burner. Turn loose."

Red calmly took another puff and remarked:

"Who's doin' this? Who swiped this butt anyhow? Wait a while."

Finally he extended the half-smoked cigaret in Ike's direction. Ike seized it hurriedly and drew a deep drag from it.

"Everything is roses," he remarked to the world in general. "Everything is roses."

The galley grew quiet. In the corners men sat huddled together dozing off. Peace reigned supreme.

Down below, the men were sleeping peacefully. Other than the sounds made by sleeping men, the compartments were quiet. Suddenly all snores ceased as if by magic. A gentle tap as if some one had hit the hull of the ship with a hammer, sounded in each sleeping man's ear.

A quartermaster woke with a start.

"Good Lord!" said he. "Somebody's unloadin' ash-cans! Let's go from here."

There was no hesitation. As one man, the crew rose and reached for life-jackets and sea-boots, slipped them on and sank back on the edges of the lower bunks, tensely waiting for something to happen. Another tap sounded, and the men began to boil up out of the open hatches on a dead-run for their battle stations.

In the galley Red, startled out of a doze by the noise of stamping feet, ejaculated:

"What the ——! Hey!" as he sighted another Q. M., "hey Jiggs! What's up?"

"Somebody's droppin' ash-cans. Somethin's goin' to happen immediate. Me fer my station."

"Outside, bums," roared Ike to the gun-crew. "Outside an' man number one on the jump! Make it snappy."

Up on the forecastle rushed the gun-crew. Attracted by the tumult, the O. D. hung his head over the bridge rail and shouted:

"What's the trouble? Somebody have a bad dream?"

"Somebody's turned loose with a flock of depth charges," said Red, who had gained the bridge by that time and stood ready at the general alarm button. "The whole dizzy bunch come bustin' outa the hatch like as if the Jerries was ridin' their tails. Must 'a heard the bombs bustin'."

"Sound general alarm and call the captain. Full speed ahead. Messenger, go aft and see what the radio has caught."

The alarm bells began their clamor. All over the ship men hurried to their battle stations. Ammunition chests were broken open and the shells laid out neatly at hand for the loading crews. Pointers and trainers stepped upon their platforms and swung the muzzles of the guns outboard. Tensely they waited for the word from the bridge, designating the bearing and distance of their targets. The loading crews stood, swaying easily to the roll of the ship, ready to serve the guns with shells as fast as the triggers could be pulled. Down below, the blowers hummed in an ever-increasing crescendo as the ship speeded up to thirty knots. The *Percival* was ready for battle and spoiling for a scrap.

The captain mounted to the bridge to take charge. Suddenly he asked:

"Why all the excitement? Did some one have a brainstorm?"

JUST then the messenger arrived on the bridge clutching a message in one fist. He shoved it in at the captain. Rushing to the after chart board where a well-shaded lamp glowed, the skipper rapidly scanned the message.

Sticking his head out from under the shelter he called:

"Bos'n's mate, pass the word to secure from general quarters. Drop back to standard speed. The *Judson*, twelve miles to the north of us, dropped two depth charges and reports sinking a sub. Lucky ship! We'll have to buck up and look sharp or all of them will be sunk before we get a chance at another. Some ships are lucky anyhow. Well, better luck next time."

"Nerves must be stretched taut on this ship," spoke the O. D. "Before I had rung general quarters, the crew were at battle stations. They must have heard the bombs explode."

"Nerves ——!" exploded the captain. "It's a —— fine crew I've got, ready any time and don't wait to be dragged out of their bunks. Man, this is a black night. Bet the flotilla is scattered all over the seven seas by morning. We won't be able to see one of them at dawn."

Gradually, the crew disappeared down the hatches to crawl into their bunks, fully dressed, light up a cigaret, talk over the latest excitement and drift back to sleep.

In to the galley the gun-crew stumbled, to light up cigarets, draw bowls of coffee, and talk over the luck of some ships. Suddenly, after every one was settled comfortably, some one came stumbling into the galley, slipped, and gave a wild whoop as he fell.

"Who in —— is that?" asked Ike, angrily.

"It's only that slewfooted Q. M., Red," answered a seaman. "He's like the cow's tail, allus behind."

"These —— boots got me tangled up again. Seems like I can't learn 'em the rules of the road. If it wasn't so cold I'd survey 'em overboard and go barefoot," said Red diffidently.

" 'Salright. You're dumb like the rest of them bunting rippers," said Ike. "Gimme cigaret."

"Wait a minute, guy, I got me another one of them Fatimas when I called the skipper. Save yu butts."

Interestedly, Ike watched the glow of the cigaret until he judged it had burned far enough, then:

"Come on, Red, come on. Don't be a hog all your life. It's butts now."

Red took a last draw on the cigaret and extended it toward Ike. Ike took it with a sigh of satisfaction and drew a deep lungful of the smoke and remarked:

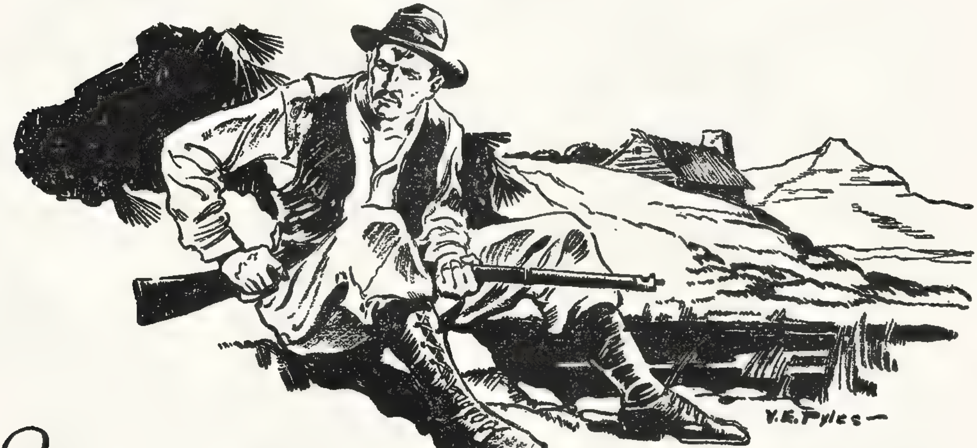
"Another draw an' she'll be lip-burner. She sure is rollin' pretty tonight. Everything is roses."

From the hatchways a chorus of gentle snores, and some not so gentle, arose. A seaman remarked:

"Listen to that bird rip 'em off! He better roll over before he chokes hisself!"

"Y'betcha," agreed another seaman.

In the corners of the galley, men huddled together for comfort and warmth, dozing off now and then, waiting for the time when they should be needed. Peace reigned supreme.



The CABIN and the SPRING

by LESLIE McFARLANE

Author of "An Imposter," "The River Trail," etc.

JOE GRAHAM lay under a birch tree at the top of a hillock overlooking the path to the spring and dozed in the afternoon sun. There was a rifle beside him for he was waiting for an enemy.

He was pleasantly drowsy. Once in a while he slapped at a fly; occasionally he sniffed at the smoke that drifted thinly down from the bush back of the pasture. It was summer's end, and there were fires in the woods; a gossamer haze hung over the valley. For two weeks there had been no rain. The Sleeping Wolf Mountains, far to the north, could hardly be distinguished through the drifting smoke clouds rising from the wooded slopes.

Vogel, he reflected with satisfaction, would be along some time during the afternoon. The spring on the Vogel farm, he knew, had dried up, for he had seen the imprint of his neighbor's heavy boot in the soft earth about his own spring; that was why he was waiting now to catch Vogel in the act of returning for more water.

They had once been friends, but that time was long past. Ever since the quarrel over the cabin, which had terminated in a lawsuit wherein the judge at the district court had decided in Vogel's favor, there had been enmity between them. The cabin between their two farms, the cabin they had built together when they had first come to northern Ontario, had been given over to Vogel, and Graham burned with the bitterness of defeat and humiliation. The fact that they had once been comrades intensified his hatred, and he had waited a long time, with accumulating resentment, for a chance to even the score.

So he waited above the path to the spring, and the thin smoke drifted down from the back bush.

HE COULD hear the *clink-clank* of Vogel's water-pail, long before he saw Vogel himself come striding down the path. He watched as the rangy form of his neighbor came into view, and he grinned maliciously as he eyed the pail Vogel was swinging so confidently. Vogel was a tall, shock-headed fellow, with long, ungainly arms. He was utterly unconscious of Graham's presence, for he was whistling quietly.

When Vogel was immediately below the hillock, Graham called out suddenly—

"Where you goin', Vogel?"

The tall man stopped short in his stride, and looked up, his features hardening to a sullen defiance.

"Goin' to get some water," he mumbled.

"Y' know you're trespassin', don't you?"

" 'Tain't trespassin'," replied Vogel doggedly. "We got to have water."

"Use your own spring, then."

"It's dried up."

"Well—that's your business. Don't let it dry up."

"Got to have water," insisted Vogel, stubbornly, brushing back a streak of hair from his glistening forehead.

"Not outa my spring. I gotta look out for myself."

"Plenty of water in your spring."

"Not for you."

Vogel knitted his thick brows. He was a proud man, and ordinarily he would have simply cursed Joe Graham and scorned to take water from his spring under any circumstances, but he could not afford to do this now, for his own spring was dry, and one must have water.

"Ain't so much for myself," he said, slowly, "but the wife's got to have water. Housework, and the like."

"Should 'a' thought of that before," said Joe Graham with callous indifference. "I'm owner here, and you're trespassin'. Whyn't you come and ast me?"

He had no intention of depriving the Vogels of water, for he was not inhuman; he merely wished to squeeze the last sweet drop of satisfaction out of this moment of triumph, out of this moment when he had Vogel seeking a favor of him.

He wanted to play with Vogel, to make a suppliant of him, to torment him, to reap full revenge in humiliation, for the manner in which Vogel had humbled him over the cabin. Later on he would unbend, he would become magnanimous, and he would condescend to give his neighbors water, with a condescension designed to make Vogel squirm.

Vogel, however, did not know this. He realized the bitterness against him in Graham's heart, and he believed Graham meant all he said; on his side, he hated his neighbor because of the cabin affair, which had been an expensive and annoying business, and his hatred made him ready to believe that Graham would be fully capable of depriving him of water. He lost his temper.

"YOU dirty rat," he shouted. "It's just like you. You'd make us die of thirst if you could. You yellow skunk—you—you—" he choked in his exasperation. "You won't keep me away from your spring. Fight it out!"

He made a step forward, down the path, and Graham, with a sense of dismay, saw his delicious revenge slipping away from him. Righteously angry, he raised the rifle a little.

Vogel noticed the weapon for the first time. He paled, and then, mistaking Graham's intent, reached swiftly for his belt.

"Draw on me, would you?" he shouted, angrily. "It's just like your cowardly way—keep me away from your spring with a gun—you rat—"

Graham was coldly furious. He fumbled nervously with the rifle.

It wouldn't do to shoot, of course—not at him—just to scare him, throw a fright into him, so he wouldn't be so smart—and as Vogel hurled insults at him, he raised the rifle higher. A shot over his head now—just to teach him.

He was very surprized when he saw Vogel pointing the revolver at him, and more surprized when he heard it bark. Vogel, being of a hotter temper, had fired. He realized that matters had reached a serious stage, that his life was in danger, so he pulled the trigger. He was barely conscious of the sharp report, of the slight kick of the rifle, for he was staring at Vogel with horrified intensity, and he saw the man step forward, hesitate, and then drop to the ground, clutching at his thigh.

"You shot me," said Vogel, in an astonished tone. Then, in an access of rage. "You shot me—you—you—"

He began to curse in a futile, preoccupied sort of way, tearing at his overalls, to examine the wound.

"That'll teach him," said Graham to himself, trying to quell the guilty panic that possessed him, as he slipped down off the mound and hurried away to the path leading to the farmhouse. "Serves him right. He tried to shoot me first."

He was very frightened.

Had it not been for the women, he and Ike Vogel would have been good friends.

When they first came North, they had been inseparable; they had prospected together, gone on sprees together, eaten and bunked together, and had finally taken up bush farms together, living in masculine amity until each had brought a separate Eve into their Eden. They had been living in a cabin on Vogel's land, but when Vogel married, he built a farmhouse of his own and Graham stayed on in the cabin; then, when he married, he built a house and the cabin was deserted.

The women, however, had been jealous of each other from the start. When Joe Graham, who looked on the cabin by now almost as his own, ventured to make use of it as a stable, Mrs. Vogel berated Vogel for permitting such impudence. When Vogel, unwillingly enough, made a half-hearted protest, Mrs, Graham took a part in the row, objected vigorously, and bade her husband stand up for his rights like a man.

One word led to another; the dispute over the cabin was followed by a row over a fence; the row over the fence was followed by a quarrel over a stray cow—and all the time the cabin stood between the two farms, a ramshackle and melancholy symbol of the enmity which embittered their isolation.

Once in a while, Joe Graham caught himself thinking of the days when he and Ike had wandered about the North Country together, of their prospecting ventures and their hunting trips and the good times they had shared in town; he remembered the first days when they had taken up the bush farms, when they had known a loyalty and friendship which seemed all the stronger now by contrast.

Once in a while, indeed, he caught himself wishing they could forget all the foolishness that had separated them, and that they could sit out on the back stoop together in the evenings and smoke their pipes and talk man's talk; these thoughts he sternly repressed, believing them unworthy of his pride. He spent his evenings in doleful silence, listening to his wife, who could be very tiresome at times, although she was a good woman, and an excellent helpmeet.

The sun did not shine next morning. It did not even appear to rise, although daylight crept half-heartedly about the farm. There was a thick haze of smoke, which obscured the sky.

A few of the scattered bush fires were no longer scattered; they had burned over to each other and joined forces, and then a heavy breeze had risen. This breeze carried wide flakes of ash that drifted solemnly over the farm like black snow, falling silently and unobtrusively out of the gray pall of smoke; the ash was warm to the touch, and Joe Graham went up to the top of an adjacent hill to survey the situation.

The entire valley was hidden in a gray blanket of smoke, pierced here and there by black spires of burned trees, and at places he could see ruddy little lakes of pinkish flame reflected in the cloud. Silence hung over the valley. The smoke rolled heavily and quietly. Under the great cloud one sensed an ominous presence at work, irresistibly, calmly at work. The Sleeping Wolf Range could not be seen, the gray cloud merged imperceptibly with the horizon and the sky, and mingled with the clouds and there was only a faint area of brightness to indicate the presence of the sun. At his feet, he could see the farmhouse and the outbuildings, with the little fences trailing off into obscurity, and beyond, the bush, which was like a frame to a smudged picture. He could see Vogel's place, dimly, over to the left, with the wall of woods behind it. The cabin which had been the cause of all their trouble stood, solitary, between the two farms, in the middle of a wide field.

The hot breeze sluggishly fanned his face, and he became alarmed.

A breeze of any kind was dangerous at that time, and this had in it a quality of impending danger, as if it were but the forerunner of breezes more intense, and gusts of deadly peril. He noticed how the edges of the smoke cloud seemed like straggling fingers, reaching silently and remorselessly out to obscure more and more of the countryside and, as the smoke over the back woods grew deeper, the little lakes of flame grew brighter and even larger. He watched, fascinated, as two of these lakes widened and finally met, and bright sheets of flame shot up through the smoke.

He hurried down to the farm.

"Wind's blowin' this way," he told his wife. "Might have to make a bolt for it."

She had closed the windows of the house, but even then the smoke had penetrated, and the kitchen was insufferably close. She was standing by the window, dabbling at her eyes with a handkerchief—perhaps it was from the smoke. One could hardly see the barn by now. Even the fence was only a faint and irregular outline seeming to isolate them from the world.

"Is it a bad fire?" she asked, mechanically.

"Bad enough. I don't mind a bit of smoke, but this wind ain't comfortin'."

He went outside again. He was restless. The horse was stamping about in the stable. He noticed that the hens were huddled together in the barnyard. The family cat slank across his path and disappeared into the smoke.

The smoke was coming down in clouds, he noticed now. The wind had perceptibly increased. The warm ash was swept down from the bush in thick, dusty particles. In ten minutes the breeze was a gale and the fire roared upon them.

WHEN he went back to the house, his wife was packing a few personal belongings in a bundle.

"We're goin' to be cleaned out," she observed without emotion.

"Oh, I don't know," he said, trying to be cheerful. "Wind might change."

"No. It's gettin' worse. Where'll we go."

"No place but the spring, I guess."

They had often discussed the probability of bush fire, and the meager avenues of escape. It would be futile to flee in the face of a big blaze, for it would surely overtake them, and there was always the danger of being cut off by other fires between the farm and the town. The root-house was inadvisable as a place of refuge, for one could smother too easily. There was no lake or river near by—only the spring. It was a large spring, and there was not a great deal of bush around; while it did not make an ideal refuge, it was at least acceptable.

"Yeah—I guess we better take to the spring," he agreed.

The wind increased rapidly in force. A few minutes before, it had been only a breeze; now it had become a gale, and heavy clouds of smoke swirled down upon the farmhouse. The place was filled with smoke; it was impossible to see across the room. They hurried out the back door.

Outside, the burning breath of the great fire surged at them in a belch of smoke and flying cinders from the glowing forest behind. Flames were already licking at the fence, running delicately up the posts, playfully, fastidiously. The wind roared, and the air was full of a rushing bellow.

Through the smoke, one could see a blood red plate, suspended high in the gray gloom. This was the sun.

THEY reeled under the force of that torrid blast and then, blindly, stumbled through the thick smoke about the corner of the house; from there, clinging to each other, they went across the yard, reaching the gate by instinct, and then down through the back pasture toward the spring.

Once or twice, Joe Graham looked back, and at the last glimpse, he could see with a quick pang of despair that the flames were already licking the roof of the house, for flaming embers were blown with the wind.

Through the swirling smoke the old house seemed pathetic and lonely; he could see reflections of flame in the glass of its windows. It seemed frail and broken down, as though it had found itself suddenly deserted and had succumbed without resistance to the rushing flames. He could see bright streaks of fire shoot up, and then great billows of smoke from the back bush rolled across and hid the place from view.

The air was filled with a great roaring. He was conscious that his wife was still at his side, and that they were stumbling on toward the spring. The heat was terrific. Leaves on the ground were shriveling up under its breath. Perspiration smeared his face; he found that it was very difficult to breathe. His eyes were smarting with the smoke and running tears.

They were hurrying through a dense, hot smoke, heading toward the spring by instinct. He felt the grasp of his wife tighten on his arm, and he caught her as she fell.

"All right?" he shouted, bending over her, but she straightened up, and stumbled on again.

The journey seemed interminable. He began to wonder if they had taken the wrong path; if they had missed the spring altogether.

They appeared to be out of the main path of the fire now, for the smoke was not as thick as it had been, although the heat was almost unbearable. He knew then that they were near the spring, for the bush behind it was not heavy, and Vogel's farm lay just over the way, with the cleared land between.

The path grew rougher underfoot—a wave of heat burst upon them without warning—he felt sudden pain as a cinder burned against his cheek, and then the path dipped and they found themselves, surprizingly, at the verge of the spring. His wife had been clinging to his arm and, gasping, she slithered down the little path and tumbled right into the water, splashing it about her head and shoulders, sobbing, choking, half-hidden in the smoke.

There was still danger there, although the spring was large, and they would be safe enough from flame; but the smoke was a menace to be considered. He had snatched up a blanket when he left the house, and he splashed down into the spring, sloshing the blanket about in the water, and then he flung it over their heads, and they crouched together, half submerged.

He welcomed the coldness of the water and, with the wet blanket shutting out the heavy smoke, he found that it was easier to breathe.

"All right?" he shouted, to his wife.

She was sobbing hysterically and clinging to him, but he knew that there was no danger for the time, and together they stood in the spring, in the darkness under the dripping blanket, while the bush fire raged. After a while, the blanket became dry, for the heat above was intense, and he was forced to take it off and douse it in the spring again, in an awful moment, during which they were bathed in blinding, choking smoke.

It was suffocating; the smoke got into their eyes and almost blinded them; but they could only stand there and endure it, hoping that the fire would pass over before they succumbed to suffocation. He wondered how Ike Vogel was getting along. The Vogel farm had been right in the path of the flames.

Even as he thought of his old friend, he heard a faint shout.

HE RAISED the blanket a trifle and peeped out. Through the smoke, low-hanging over the spring, he could see a vague form at the water's edge, a vague, dark form, moving uncertainly about.

He hesitated a moment, then came out from under the blanket and waded through the spring, over to the figure. It was Mrs. Vogel, stupefied by the smoke, groping toward the water. He could barely discern her features in the gloom. She was gasping for breath, but she summoned up strength to speak, in a choking, unnatural voice.

"He—he's back there—" she gasped, pointing into the smoke. "Back—on the path—can't walk—"

She began to crawl down into the water, half-crazed by the experience she had undergone.

Hastily Graham carried her down into the spring, over to his wife, who took the woman underneath the blanket with her, and then he splashed back to the shore again.

He looked behind him. The waters of the spring gleamed black beneath the pall of smoke, and there was a sopping wet blanket rising slightly above the surface. That was all.

He dipped a handkerchief in the water and tied it about his head, across his mouth and nose, for the smoke was dense and penetrating, and then he turned toward the path.

Vogel was back there somewhere. Graham knew why Vogel had been unable to reach the spring; he remembered how his neighbor had clutched at his thigh the previous afternoon when their encounter had ended in shots; wounded, he had been unable to go any farther, and he had made his wife leave him and go on to the spring ahead.

For a moment his old resentment against Vogel flashed into mind, and he remembered all his fancied wrongs. He knew that he was facing death in leaving the spring; he wondered if Vogel would do as much for him; was it right, after all, to risk one's life for an enemy, for a man like Vogel? This was only for a moment, however.

The main thing was that Vogel, enemy or not, was lying on the spring path, suffocating in the smoke clouds, unable to reach safety. He did not consider it as a duty that he should go in search of Vogel because he was, in a way, responsible for the man's plight. He did not think it out very clearly at all. He simply knew that he must go and find his neighbor.

He went back down the path, through the stinging, blinding smoke that swept steadily from the north, through the terrific heat that blasted constantly down from the raging fires. Leaves of the trees beside the path were hanging shriveled and dead under the force of that heat; ash and cinders poured down with the wind.

His heart was beating heavily, as if to choke him. He had to shut his eyes to escape the intense pain caused by the smoke, and every time he opened them to see his way through the thick gloom it was as though his eyeballs were being seared. His body was streaming with sweat; every breath he took seemed useless, for the world seemed devoid of air. The handkerchief about his face was quickly sapped of moisture, and became quite dry, but it afforded some slight protection.

The red glow from the bush fire dominated the sky, shone ruddily through the smoke, and although the fire itself was some distance away, he could hear the crackling of the blazing trees.

He felt his strength ebbing away, and panic seized him as he wondered if he would be unable to find Vogel, if he would be unable to get back to the spring. Once, he tripped over a root and fell, but he rose slowly to his feet again and staggered on down the path.

He almost stumbled over Vogel before he saw him. The man was crawling painfully, slowly, over the rocky ground, like a floundering animal, almost obscured by the drifting smoke. He knelt down, and grasped Vogel by the shoulders, and helped him to his feet.

Neither spoke, for they were fighting for breath in that wilderness of heat and smoke. Vogel was a heavy man, and he leaned with all his weight on Graham before he tried to struggle on, and then he limped, painfully, favoring his injured leg.

They started back to the spring. It was a dreary nightmare. Half suffocated, wheezing for breath, they staggered mechanically forward, hardly knowing why they did so, where they were going. Their progress was desperate, uncertain; the journey was without beginning or end. They appeared to struggle blindly in an infinity of torrid obscurity, wilting under the heat, under the oppressive and smothering blasts of smoke.

The vague forms of trees loomed out of the pall beside them and disappeared again. Vogel was limp, almost unconscious, and at times Graham felt as though he could not endure the lagging weight of the man any longer, as if he must cast him aside and hurry on toward the spring. It seemed now that the spring did not exist except in his imagination, that it was an unreal and unattainable destination, luring him on and on to prodigious feats of endurance.

Finally the path dipped, and he dragged Vogel down the slope, down toward the water which gleamed faintly through the surrounding gloom. He saw the blanket on the surface, and he felt that he could never reach it, and for a moment he hesitated, swaying, still clinging to Vogel; then he saw the blanket quiver, and move, and through the smoke a form emerged dripping from the water, and he lurched down into the spring, into the arms of his wife.

SMOKE hung over the land for a long while after the fire had passed, but they were able to cast aside the blanket after long minutes of waiting in the spring. They dragged themselves out, shivering, faces blackened, eyes reddened, clothes soaking, and surveyed the waste.

The sun still burned on high, like a scarlet plate, a symbol of horror. Flames flickered here and there among the fallen trees, among the black stumps that extended far away, in ruinous disorder, toward the horizon, and the wind sent flurries of gray ash to mingle with the smoke which drifted as though reluctant to quit the scene of devastation.

Joe Graham looked out over this horror, and where his home had once stood, was nothing—just nothing. A black fence post sagged wearily under the weight of wires, and there was a hollow in the ground, filled with a tangle of rubbish, in the midst of an ash-strewn open space.

Joe Graham looked at his wife. She was staring at the place where their home had once stood. She was a frail, bent figure, in her torn and blackened dress, and her thin shoulders seemed to quiver, but when he looked at her face he saw that her lips were tightly set and that her eyes were stony.

One might have thought her stoical, but Graham knew this was not so, for he knew all the emotions that were passing through her heart at that moment, all the poignant emotions that pass through the heart of a person who sees the ruins of a home where there has been hard work and happiness—for there had been happiness, in their own fashion; he knew all the sense of desolation that comes over one who sees the black and crumbled ruins of work and arduous toil in dust before one's feet, and realizes that it must be all done over again, and that the years were passing.

He knew that she was suffering, suffering more acutely than she would possibly ever suffer again in life, and he was drawn to her by a common bond of sorrow in the loss of their home, and he put his arm around her shoulder, and they stood there in silence.

He looked at Ike Vogel. He too was staring, staring over to the west, where once his farmhouse had been standing in front of the green bush. Only now there was no farmhouse, and the green bush had been reduced to a jumble of black tree trunks and tangled stumps.

He knew what was passing through Ike Vogel's heart in that moment too, and he knew the bewilderment in his neighbor's soul, the curious bewilderment that seizes a man upon whom an unbelievable calamity has come. He knew, because that calamity had befallen him. One works, one hews a farm from the bush, one builds a house, one raises crops, one endures all the thousand hardships of the summer heat and winter frost, and then in half an hour a roaring fiend flings himself upon everything one has accomplished and reduces it to a mass of rubbish, black begrimed, and there is no recourse; one has nothing to do but start all over again.

Ike Vogel and his wife were standing there, looking down at the place where their farmhouse had once stood, and he felt an overwhelming sympathy. They were all united in affliction, where but a day before the enmity between Vogel and himself had reached a crisis where it seemed they could never be friends again; they were united in escape from a common peril, united in a common destitution.

He looked down to the south. There was a black blur against the background of tree trunks, and he strained his smarting eyes and saw—the cabin. It stood out in the midst of the open field, where, by chance, it had escaped destruction, It stood there, bravely upstanding, in the midst of all that desolation, a place where they could seek temporary shelter.

"The cabin's still standing," he said, huskily. "Let's go down. It's a good place to stay."

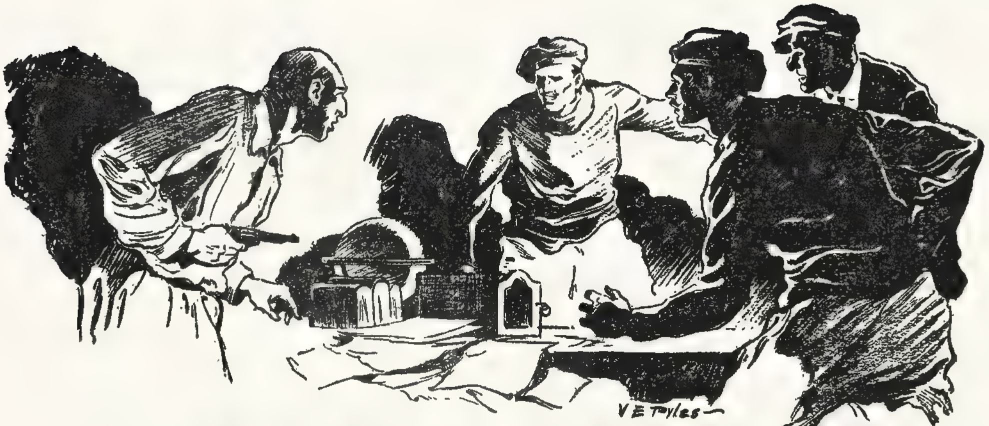
They started down toward the cabin, down Vogel hobbled painfully ahead, and Joe Graham held his arm and helped him.

"Good thing you had that spring, Joe," observed Vogel, quietly. "We'd 'a' been burned to death if it wasn't there."

"Good thing your cabin wasn't burned," replied Joe Graham, awkwardly. "We got some place to stay in, till we get things built up again."

"Yeah—it's a good thing," agreed Vogel.

They did not say any more, but they knew that the cabin and the spring would never again be anything less than bonds of deepest friendship between them.



THE RED SHADOW

A Complete Novelette by Georges Surdez.

Author of "The Figurehead," "Knaves of Spades," etc.

THREE men had halted, shadows within shadow, at the foot of the massive wall of masonry surrounding the Coupois Villa, a few miles from Paris.

"Throw your coat over the top of the wall, 'Poupon.' "

"Why?" wondered Louis Fayard.

"Because of the glass, stupid!"

Fayard, better known as Poupon—Chubby Baby—resented the amusement his question had aroused until he realized that he should have remembered that wealthy men protect their property with broken bottle glass, set in a layer of cement a-top their stone barriers. To be quite fair to himself, he recalled that he was a novice at climbing walls in the dead of night.

Guignet, the acknowledged leader of the expedition, the master mind, answered to the harmonious name of "Tallow-Mug." He had served several years in Fresne Prison. Dupuy, the slender young man who completed the group, had seen the inside of many a provincial jail, for minor offenses. They were experts, veterans, and Fayard must take gracefully whatever criticism and chaff might drop from their lips.

Therefore, he obediently doffed his coat. Then, recalling that his garment was in a better state of preservation than those of his comrades, his native sense of economy cried out in him. He resolutely thrust his arms back through the sleeves, gave a final hitch to the collar, to mark his determination.

"Nothing doing," he said slowly. "If you're so clever, why didn't you bring an old sack, which would have done just as well?"

"This is no time to argue," remarked Guignet, diplomatically. "I'll use mine." A deft movement, and the coat settled in place, removing the immediate danger of lacerated palms from the sharp, brittle glass. "Now, join your hands, Poupon. Give us a lift. 'Kitten,' you go first."

Living up to his nickname, Dupuy leaped from the locked hands to the top of the wall. From this point of vantage, he peered into the darkness for fully a half minute.

"All clear—" he whispered. "Come on, Tallow-Mug."

Tallow-Mug, accepting Poupon's help, made the crest of the wall, and settled beside his pal. Fayard stepped back a few feet, ran swiftly forward, and by the mere use of his wrist, with the ease of a professional acrobat, eased himself beside the other two.

"So far, so good," he remarked. Being a burglar was not such a difficult business, after all.

Tallow-Mug clucked his tongue in irritation.

"You boom as if you had a barrel for a chest," he pointed out. "Lucky the crib's empty, or you'd wake everybody." He panted with indignation for a few moments, then suggested shortly, "Drop down and help us."

Poupon hung by his hands for a brief second, then dropped. He was so tall that, adding the length of his arms to his stature, he was not more than a foot from the ground. Kitten placed a foot on his shoulder, bore down with his full weight, which was not enough to budge the big man, then slid down the broad chest, flexed his knees, and greeted Tallow-Mug happily, when the leader stood beside him, having arrived by the same route.

"Stow away the appreciation, and lead on. You know the way."

"Sure I do."

The Kitten bent to avoid the low branches of several small, meager trees, slid down a short slope, and the three found themselves on a graveled walk. Guignet immediately decided that the grass plots were safer. They were fairly certain that their advance information was correct, but nevertheless foolhardiness did not pay.

They walked on in silence, crossed a rustic bridge over a small brook. This awakened in Louis Fayard memories of his early life in the country, without, however, the slightest twinge of remorse.

This was the first time he was consciously breaking the law. It may be mentioned that house-breaking is a spectacular beginning. But Fayard had been punished so often for what he did not think were crimes, that incurring punishment for a genuine offense was no breath-taking experience.

He was not to blame, that much he knew. Had he been asked who was to blame, he would probably have shrugged, and said—

"Life—people."

Life—which means nothing and everything. People—that vague name that fits the millions of faces in the world. He might have said—

"The law of the land, the unnatural code that is known as the army code."

He did not owe society very much. A foundling, lacking father and mother, he had been placed with a farming family. Hard work, a man's work at ten, and two men's work at sixteen. Then the legitimate heir, fired by a desire for travel, had run away from the farm, joined the naval infantry. He had been killed, or had died of fever—no one was quite sure which—in Indo-China. The mother, bereft of one child, had noticed the foundling, and made him happy for a while, with surprizing kindness. Just as he was beginning to adjust himself to this new mode of life, Fayard's time for military service drew near.

He was strong, docile. Rebellion had been beaten out of him when he was a child. He made a good soldier, although he could never quite get away from a peasant gait while in uniform. He was a member of the 5th field artillery, part of the 7th French army corps, quartered in Besançon. Like many other country boys, Fayard first learned of the outside world while serving his country.

The old woman on the farm, who loved in him the lad who was buried by the Mekong River, sent him money orders. Fayard would stroll the quays and promenades of the city, feeling as if the universe were his. The officers liked him, and the non-coms. tolerated him. He was an anomaly in a sphere where each man tried to make the other fellow do his share of the work. Even when off duty, he would hang about the stables, talking softly to the battery horses, doing odd jobs. Horses to handle, a pipe, money orders, what more could he have asked?

There seemed no reason why he should not go through his two years and come out much improved, with the rough edges polished, ready to assume his place as right hand man to his farmer-boss.

The reason came, however, in the shape of a new sergeant. The non-com. was young, recently promoted. He was proud of his stripes, jealous of his authority. Fayard was fair game. The sergeant's short, thin body, his skinny arms, put into his head a fierce dislike of the big, good looking private.

THE non-com. was afraid of horses, afraid in a stupid way, with a fear past reason, an inborn dread, a congenital horror of anything having mane, tail and hoofs. Being afraid, he was cruel. The horses in the stables, as is the way of horses, smelled the fear that clung to him. He made them nervous. Passive and obedient with others, they kicked at him, and turned their heads to nip him when he passed by.

Fayard shook his head but said nothing. As long as his own horse was left alone he was at peace. That horse, a big bay called Clairon — Bugler — was Fayard's pet. Fayard often found himself praying that the sergeant would never touch him. Whenever the non-com. neared Clairon Fayard would start, and unconsciously move closer. The sergeant, observing this, suspected something wrong, and one afternoon entered the stall.

Clairon rolled uneasy eyes, laid his ears back, and when the opportunity came, sought to plant his strong teeth in the sergeant's elbow. The non-com. freed his arm in time to prevent serious injury and struck the animal a resounding slap on the nose. Fayard said nothing. This was justice. His horse had misbehaved without provocation.

It was another thing when the sergeant had Clairon brought from the stall and, ordering a stable orderly to hold him, kicked him in the belly with his heavily booted foot. White-faced, Fayard laid a restraining hand on his shoulder. The non-com. brushed the hand aside, and resumed kicking. Not for long. A back-hand slap sprawled him in the manure of the stall.

The old story. Blows struck on a superior, when on duty. Fayard drew down five years in a military penitentiary in Algeria. There were two types of men in the camp—weaklings and strong men. The weaklings sickened Fayard. The strong men were mostly Parisians, Apaches. When he was freed, he found a cold reception at the farm. He was a convict, dishonored. And so he had sought Guignet and Dupuy in Belleville, a certain quarter of Paris.

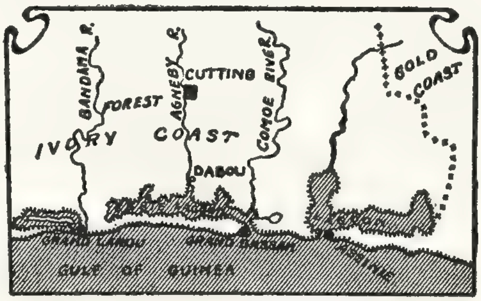
His former friends were not delighted to see him. Poupon's pink face, his great size, caused him to attract attention; in spite of his long bath of iniquity at the penitentiary, he was still too much of a greenhorn to do credit to the notorious Tallow-Mug. But friendship is friendship. They welcomed him, and they accepted him loyally—even allowed him to take part in the present job.

It was to be a choice job—no risk; big profit.

Coupois was a retired bailiff. He was supposed to have a great deal of money in currency, sixty or seventy thousand francs. He was known to be a miser. His strong-box invited investigation. Guignet sought the assistance of a woman named Lolla, some three score and five in actual age, but centuries old in wisdom. She applied for the position of housekeeper at the villa, at ridiculously low wages.

Coupois fell into the snare, and when he at last discharged her, because she would not do gardening as well as house-work, cooking and laundry, he had not the slightest suspicion that she had secured the information needed for the looting of his home. Twice a year Coupois made a trip to the country where a grandson was sprouting into manhood more wholesomely than had he been near the fascinating pavement of the City of Light. The three confederates had chosen such an excursion as the best time to pay their visit.

Beside Guignet, Dupuy, Fayard and Lolla, there were others who would share in the profits. There was Dupuy's younger brother, a cigaret smoker of nine or ten, astute and evil-intentioned more than was good for a man seventy, who had also examined the ground before the actual robbery.



There were others of the same ilk who had split the profits of other raids with Guignet and company. Altogether they formed a powerful gang which had no name, the members themselves hardly conscious of belonging to a definite organization. Loyalty never failed among them. It was a well grounded belief in the police force that to arrest one of them was to begin a feud, with an unfailingly evil ending for the policeman, who would be found with his neck broken at the foot of a flight of stairs or with a fractured skull in a deserted street.

It was only through the protection of such powerful god-fathers as Tallow-Mug and the Kitten that Fayard had been accepted on trust, without having to show proof of his worth. And he was satisfied that in two hours tonight he would make more money than he could hope to earn in several years of honest toil. One might quarrel with the moral angle, truly, but the pecuniary outlook was sound—and in any case, a republican government should permit neither a foundling nor a non-com. of artillery, afraid of horses.

Fayard was not consciously reviewing his past as he approached the villa, looming darkly through the thin trees. He was merely drifting with the tide of events.

Fifty feet from the house the three men halted suddenly. An unpleasant sound had greeted them. A dog was growling. Why the animal had not winded them when they climbed over the wall is uncertain. Perhaps even watch dogs sleep.

"——!" exclaimed Guignet. "I thought your kid brother said there was no dog, Kitten."

Dupuy, gesturing helplessly, cleared himself of responsibility for his brother's statements.

Poupon summed up the situation in one word—

"New—"

"New—what?"

"New dog. That's why he didn't bark at us. Isn't used to the place, doesn't know when he's supposed to bark. Wait. I'll call him."

Fayard squatted gravely, whistled softly between his teeth, a friendly, coaxing sound. There was a pause. The dog did not growl again. Another whistle.

"He's chained," suggested Guignet.

"No, we'd have heard the chain rattle," Poupon assured him.

At the third whistle, a larger setter leaped across the yard, fawned at Fayard's feet. The man spoke to him in a low voice, took his long jaw between his hands and rocked him from side to side. The other two men were half respectful, half amused. Dupuy attempted to stroke the hairy back. The dog warned him with a short growl.

"Leave him alone," said Fayard. "He's all right. I'll take him away when we go."

"And get us spotted, eh?" chided Guignet. "He stays here. This is no tour to collect pets."

Fayard straightened up ruefully.

"He's a nice dog, though."

"Nice dog! ——! A dog who won't even bark at burglars. If you want to, stay out here, and talk to your friend," said Tallow-Mug scornfully. "After all—no. We may need those big arms of yours, if that tin box is any good."

He pulled a shapeless mass of cloth from his coat pocket, and separated it into several parts.

"Here, Kitten, a pair of gloves. No use leaving finger-prints over everything. Here you are, Poupon."

Fayard tried the gloves. They were of thin cotton and too small for his thick hands.

"Can't get them on," he grunted.

THE dog still was at his heels. The three stopped near the back door. Kitten reached into his belt, and brought out the key, duplicated from the original through the help of Lolla.

"Keep your hands to yourself, Poupon," Tallow-Mug advised. "Anyway, your prints are not on record in Paris. And they won't send to Algeria for them. Obscurity has its compensations, hasn't it?"

Tallow-Mug was something of a philosopher. He spent much of his leisure time, which took up the greater part of his waking hours, culling pearls of wisdom from the romances published in the daily papers. He was not far from considering himself a worthy imitator of the celebrated polite thieves of fiction, who move through six hundred heart-rending pages. He had once been known to give a blind beggar a goldpiece, after a successful haul.

The key slid into the groove. The Kitten twisted it tentatively, and the bolt slid back. The door, treated by Lolla, swung open noiselessly.

Guignet produced a bottle from his trousers pocket, uncorked it, moistened a handkerchief, which he used to wipe the woodwork where Dupuy had placed his hands.

"Two precautions are better than one. A lot of that finger-print business is published to scare off those who don't know any better. But you never can tell," he explained. "I got this stuff from a druggist, and I'll welcome them to take finger-prints after I use it."

Although Fayard had a wholesome respect for the finger-print system used by the police, he was annoyed by Guignet's excessive caution. And yet he reasoned that Tallow-Mug must know the ropes.

They entered through a pantry, passed a kitchen, a large living-room. They came to a stairway leading to the upper floor, where Coupois had his study, and where his strong-box, hidden in the wall, was located.

Tallow-Mug led the way through the darkness, scratching a match now and then. In the brief intervals of light Fayard saw the pasty face which had earned Guignet's nickname, the gleaming teeth under the small mustache, saw The Kitten's protruding jaw and heavy eyebrows, too heavy for his narrow face. In a mirror, he caught a glimpse of his own pink face, looming above the others, and he smiled at the tense expression he had caught himself wearing.

"——! No more matches," grunted Guignet. "My box's empty."

"Here—" offered Dupuy.

Quietly they reached the top floor.

"Now," Guignet murmured, "we turn to the right, three steps—one—two—and three—turn the handle softly—that precious Lolla, she thinks of everything—here we are."

They entered a large room. The starlight, diffused, filtered through the windows. Guignet found a wide table cloth and hangings which he used to cover the panes completely, before making a light that might be seen from the outside. The darkness complete, a match scratched once more, sputtered; then a vacillating light, stronger and yellowish, bloomed out.

Tallow-Mug had lighted a candle.

"Don't let me forget that candle when we go," he said. Then, "I keep thinking about the dog. A dog means a man about. What if there's some one here?"

"You crazy?" the Kitten derided. "That's just when the old man would hire one. He's too mean to buy him, so he rents him for the nights he's away."

With a swagger Tallow-Mug went to the wall, tapped it.

"Here—" He slid a panel back, and showed the green painted steel side of the strong-box. The brass rim of the key-hole glistened. "Here, Poupon, candy for the baby! Here, bills and coins. And here, the jimmy. Good thing that old guy didn't trust banks and didn't buy a safe. Good thing for us, I mean. Easy. One, two, push, Poupon."

It was not so easy, but Poupon's strength overcame the stubborn steel. The lock twisted open. Fayard was at first disappointed. He had almost expected an immediate glitter of gold. Guignet, busy with bottle and damp cloth, admonished him.

"Drop your paws, Poupon. Kitten, you have gloves. Handle it."

Dupuy took out sheafs of papers, looked them over and threw them to the floor. Behind were bills, and several squat little sacks which clinked pleasantly as they fell into the outspread cloth Tallow-Mug had made ready on the floor.

"How much?" Fayard asked, less from greed than curiosity.

"Can't bother now," Guignet replied, recorking the bottle with trembling fingers. "We'll see after. Let's beat it," he urged "I have a bad hunch."

"Cold feet!" Dupuy derided, superbly calm, as he lighted a cigaret from the candle with careless insolence. He opened his lips to add a sarcastic comment.

Then a shaky voice came from the door through which they had entered.

"What are you people doing in my house?" some one asked.

Fayard was startled. Tallow-Mug, arms wide, stood before the gaping strong-box, his lips parted. The Kitten had gathered himself into a compact ball of muscle, crouching with one hand fumbling in his pocket. Poupon knew that Dupuy had an open knife in that pocket.

But the old man had backed his words immediately—with a revolver barrel.

The trio contemplated Coupois, who in turn stared at them with fearful intensity. He was in his night shirt, a dingy, rumpled garment, beneath which thin legs, bristling with gray hairs, emerged; twisted toes sinking into the worn carpet. A neck as long and red as that of a scavenger bird, a long nose which did not even possess the saving grace of being red at the tip, washed out blue eyes set too closely together beneath a heavy, sloping forehead, Coupois was unlovely. His gaunt, bony hand was clasped tightly around the butt of the revolver, an old-fashioned weapon with a formidable bore.

Coupois was not a brave man. With the situation well in hand, as he must have believed before risking himself, he trembled so that the muzzle described small circles; his throat twitched convulsively, and he moistened his thin, cracked lips continuously with the tip of a leathery tongue.

Having delivered his ultimatum, he was silent, patently afraid to stir matters into active hostilities. Tallow-Mug slowly straightened to an erect position and smiled wanly.

A CLOCK on the stairway ticked loudly. Thirty seconds went by. The four men seemed petrified in their tracks. Fayard, probably because he was healthier than the others, recovered from the shock first. He unobtrusively backed against the center table, toward the right of the old man. The Kitten stealthily moved back toward the windows, probably tempted to dive through the glass to the lawn below, scarcely a fifteen foot drop.

"Is—is everything there—in the sack?" finally asked Coupois.

"Yes, m'sieur," Guignet admitted, jarred into conventional politeness by the unexpected turn of affairs.

"You have taken nothing downstairs?"

"No, m'sieur."

"I have a telephone in the house," Coupois said. "I could have you all arrested."

Fayard smiled. If the old man turned his back to reach the telephone, it was scarcely to be expected that the three burglars would await his pleasure. Coupois evidently wished to pretend to be kind while working his own ends.

"You will go out one after another—the last man carrying the candle, and don't let me see you again."

His words were resolute enough, but the lips that uttered them trembled more and more. The receding chin seemed about to slide down the skinny chest. Tallow-Mug and The Kitten, directly menaced by the revolver, were willing to call a halt to the entire performance, were longing for the spacious lawns and the trees.

And this was The Kitten, who had fought a winning fight against the bully of the penitentiary! This was Tallow-Mug who in Biskra had whipped several Spaniards in a café brawl.

Fayard had thought them superb then. In one minute they had sunk into nothingness. Truly, the smiling city weakened the toughs of the Algerian camps. A concerted rush, and the old man would go down. One might be hurt, but what mattered? Guignet with his "Yes, m'sieur, No, m'sieur," as servile as a valet!

Were they to be bluffed out of a good haul by an old man, who had probably accumulated his fortune by bleeding the poor?

He lowered his hands to the edge of the table, balanced his weight carefully. Swiftly, his left foot flashed out and upward. His aim was true. He had struck the old man's wrist. The gun whirled toward the ceiling. The agile Kitten, taking advantage of the opportunity, caught the weapon before it struck the floor.

And Poupon leaped at Coupois, threw his arms about the thin torso, pinioned the man's elbows to the body.

"Fine work, Poupon!" Tallow-Mug complimented. Leaving the big man to hold the struggling Coupois, he gathered the corners of the cloth. Kitten had torn a double wire from the wall.

"So much for the phone!" he said. "Now for the old guy—"

He slid forward, drawing the open knife from his pocket. Coupois, at the sight of the steel, screamed, or rather attempted to scream. Fayard's wide palm pressed the sound back in his throat.

"Don't worry. Nothing'll happen to you," Fayard assured him. "Kitten, none of that. We can tie him up, gag him."

"The —— we will!" Dupuy said.

Tallow-Mug was undecided.

"He's seen us, you know, he's seen us—"

Above Poupon's fingers, Coupois rolled terrified eyes.

"Why all the fuss?" snarled The Kitten.

He lunged with the knife, but Fayard swung the old man away, quickly enough to prevent the long blade from sinking into the jugular vein, but not in time to prevent injury. The point entered Coupois' shoulder, and warm blood spurted over Fayard's right hand and forearm.

"Cut it out, Dupuy, cut it out—"

"You called my name! You called my name!" Dupuy screeched.

The old man had braced his feet against the wall. With sudden, unsuspected strength, born of despair and fear, he tore himself from Poupon's grip. Fayard tripped, staggered against the wall, while Coupois vanished into his bedroom.

"He heard my name—" The Kitten said, slowly.

"I won't stand for it," Fayard protested, "it's murder—the guillotine."

"If we don't shut his mouth, it's attempted murder," Dupuy declared, "and Cayenne, or New Caledonia. No, thanks." He held up the revolver. "You say much more, Poupon, and—"

Guignet had produced a knife in his turn. From white his face had turned to yellow. He picked up the candle, left the room, entering the chamber across the hall.

"He's in here, back of the bed," he called out. "Come on, Kitten."

The Kitten ran out. A tremulous shriek rose from the bedroom, the howl of a cornered animal.

"No, no—I won't talk!"

Then the sound of blows, a scuffle, a yell—groans.

Cold sweat dripping down his spine, Fayard listened, unable to move, paralyzed by horror. The other two, maddened by the fear of discovery, were evidently raining knife blows into the miserable, quivering carcass. The Kitten grunted plaintively as he struck.

Then Guignet came out, holding the candle high. He looked as if drunk. He bent low, and wiped his blade on the carpet, mechanically. Dupuy imitated him. Then the Kitten was violently sick, the reaction from the intense excitement. He sobbed.

"——!" Guignet murmured.

"He's done," the Kitten said. "Let's go."

Fayard picked up the bundle, and they went downstairs. Guignet, before going out, blew out the candle, then carefully locked the back door. The dog was still there. He followed the three toward the miniature brook that meandered through the property of Coupois. On the shore, by the rustic bridge, Dupuy halted.

"You go ahead, I'll just dip my feet in the water. My sandals are full of grape-juice."

Fayard was in a hurry to leave. He paid no further attention to the dog, who had halted at the bridge and was whining softly. Under the trees, near the wall, Dupuy joined them.

"All set?" he asked. Then he added, "Lucky there are no neighbors near. Didn't he yell? Say, I went white to the liver, didn't I? It was that game of tag, with the candle playing on his face that sickened me. ——! It's easier to kill a young fellow."

He would have stood there foolishly and talked all night. Strangely enough, he appeared to feel at leisure, while Fayard was anxious only to put a great distance between himself and the villa.

"Let's hurry," urged Guignet.

Again the two had recourse to Fayard's strength, again the big man eased himself over the wall. They gained the National Road, a broad expanse of white cutting through the countryside. Against the sky a glow of light marked Paris in the distance. They strode along silently, diving into the brush by the roadside whenever the sound of hoofs warned them of an approaching cart bound for the city with vegetables.

They passed the Octroi guard at the city gate without attracting attention, and gained Guignet's room where they could consider themselves as safe as anywhere.

"We'll lie low for a few days," Guignet said, in a colorless voice. "Let's count up."

"Yes," the Kitten agreed, "Let's count up."

BUT there was no counting that night. Suddenly fatigue overcame them. Guignet and Dupuy stretched out on the bed, fully dressed, and were soon snoring.

Fayard, stronger and less sensitive to nervous impressions, was not tired, and sleep evaded him.

Gruesome as the murder had been, it nevertheless seemed a simple thing. A dozen knife thrusts and the old man was dead. Poupon, remorseful for his share in the crime, could not altogether blame himself. Dupuy had been in such a frenzy that the slightest move to interfere would have caused him to press the trigger of the revolver.

Fayard was sufficiently egotistical to prefer his own life to that of the elderly miser. He reasoned that during his lifetime Coupois had probably shown more cold-blooded hatred, had been far more cruel than his assassins. And he had done all under the protection of the law, and the law's enforcers, policemen, gendarmes, special guards.

With the bitter philosophy learned in the penitentiary, Fayard realized that Coupois had been executed rather than murdered. He had amassed his money from the needy. Men pushed to crime from need and lack of opportunity, more even than by a taste for the adventurous life of the Apache, had struck him down in the end, just as justice took a culprit and placed his shaven neck beneath the heavy slicer of the guillotine.

The guillotine—an ominous, rectangular shadow, glowing redly—a shadow which was now across Fayard's road. He had not struck Coupois, but who would believe him, or believe his pals if they told the truth? If they were caught and condemned, he would be as well. There was but one end for criminals of their type. They were uninteresting, burglars who had killed to avoid capture.

Fayard felt of his powerful neck. He recalled various stories of executions. As a boy, he had taken newspapers into the cubby-hole back of the stable which served him as a room, and read them by the dim light of a lantern. Always it had been on a cold night, for in the summer he had been too tired to keep awake, even to read.

He felt suddenly sure that if he were caught and condemned his execution would take place on a winter morning, with the snow on the ground and upon the slanting roofs near the prison. The picture was clear—weirdly precise in details.

The thought choked him. He felt thirsty and rose from the pile of blankets he had accepted as a couch. At the slight sound he made Guignet and Dupuy sat up, wide-eyed —by common consent, without worded consultation, a lamp had been left alight—and both called out—

"Who's there?"

Then they laughed—nervously. Fayard filled a tumbler from the pitcher on the rickety wash-stand and drank. It was as if fire were consuming his stomach. He half emptied the huge container. Hearing the sound of gurgling water, the others rose in their turn, and drank.

"Wish we had something strong," Dupuy said.

"So do I," added Guignet.

They looked at each other; then Tallow-Mug went to the window.

"The gin-mill across the street has opened up for the drivers," he stated, "let one of us go out and get something."

Dupuy silently drew a five-franc piece from his pocket.

Guignet hesitated. It was patent that neither wished to go downstairs. Fayard took the money, went out and returned with two bottles of *marc*, grape alcohol. They lighted cigarets, smoked endlessly. The glasses were filled and emptied. The conversation lagged. The Kitten passed his hands repeatedly over his face and peered cautiously at his sandals, still damp from the dip in the brook. He ended by removing them.

The boisterous talk that usually accompanied drinking did not take place. Fayard would grin at Guignet, who would grin at Dupuy, who grinned at both.

"They'll never find us," Dupuy said.

"No, never," approved Guignet.

And they drank.

It was full daylight when they went to sleep at last.

Not for long, for about noon a knock on the door awoke them.

It was Lolla, come to obtain news of the job. She was stout and good-natured. Her hair, which had been a natural gray while serving Coupois, was dyed a glowing blond. Tallow-Mug and The Kitten accused her immediately.

"Say, you old——, the old fellow was in—what was all that talk about his going away to visit his grandon?"

The woman persisted in her first information.

"We say he was there, and we ought to know!"

"In? Then you didn't get nothing?"

Guignet smirked, and pointed at the pillow-case under the bed.

"Who said so?" he challenged.

"Then?"

"Sure! Me and The Kitten, we fixed him."

Lolla's eyes flashed, and blood pouring into her face streaked her cheeks and nose with tiny red lines.

"You bled him?"

"Clean—he squealed like a porker in a slaughter house."

"Serve him right, the stingy old——!" Lolla concluded. "How much?"

The money was at last counted. During the counting Dupuy's younger brother arrived. He was called "Dede," shortened from Andre. He was a charming boy, with sufficient dirt on his face to make him look like the innocent child he was not. He promptly begged a cigaret from Tallow-Mug and stood, hands in pockets, watching the count. The grown-ups evidently trusted him on a matter of life and death. Dede had learned to keep his mouth shut early in his eventful existence.

"NOT as much as we thought," Tallow-Mug grumbled. "The old fellow cheated us. Thirty-five thousand."

"Nothing to spit upon, either," said Dede.

"You're right, kid," admitted Tallow-Mug. "That means seven thousand apiece for the three of us who did the heavy work, four thousand for Lolla, and the rest for the bunch. All agreed? Agreed."

"What about me?" Dede asked.

"You? Your brother'll take care of you. Ain't that enough?"

"Like —— he will! The Kitten is only my half-brother, on account that his old man was sent to the pen when he was a kid no bigger'n me. He'll keep what's his and we won't see a red cent at home. And didn't I fool around the place, and find out where to hop the wall?"

"And you didn't tell us there was a dog," the Kitten proclaimed.

"There wasn't when I was there."

"That's enough," Tallow-Mug cut in abruptly. "There's a few odd bills I'll give your ma. You ain't old enough to be showing cart-wheels around."

"All right," Dede admitted. "But don't count on me any more. I'll break my back clumping around, finding out things for nothing!"

"Your family will be helped," Guignet said sincerely. "And that's your duty, to help your folks. Anyway, I already told you it would look funny for you to have money of your own. Shut up now, or I'll slap you."

Dede, knowing that this was no idle threat, subsided meekly.

"Here, Poupon, your share," said Guignet.

Fayard surveyed the bills and coins casually.

"Keep it," he said.

Guignet eyed the heap, shrugged.

"As you say."

Fayard, who had made his decision impulsively, now spoke up—

"Furthermore, I'm going."

"Where?"

"Out of here. It isn't my style. If you don't care for your necks, I do. I'm going north to Normandy. There no one knows about me. I can hire out as a farm-hand."

"So this is good-by?"

"It is."

"What is the matter? Has monsieur acquired scruples? Our company is not good enough for him?" demanded the Kitten softly.

"Yes."

The Kitten turned to Guignet:

"He'll go out of here, and sell us. Can't you see he's scared stiff?"

"No, I wouldn't do that," Poupon assured.

Guignet faced him quietly.

"You can go, Poupon. I think you mean what you say. But if you don't, just remember that with us gone, in the shade, there are others. Nobody gets away with it. If they did, the life wouldn't be worth the living. There'd be no justice. We didn't ask you to come here, in the first place. We took you along as a favor. Remember that."

"I'll remember. I don't blame you," Fayard said, adding simply, "I guess I haven't the guts for the job, that's all."

He picked up his cap and turned to go.

No one interfered with him. Dede, with exaggerated respect, opened the door, and bared his head. Lolla laughed loudly. And Poupon went down the rickety stairs into the street.

He believed that he had left behind the last trace of the penal camp. The murder had accomplished one thing—he was going to keep away from his criminal friends.

He made his way to a wider street. In his pockets he had a few francs, enough to get him north to Normandy.

Again thirst gripped him. He entered a gin-mill and stood before the zinc counter.

"A pint of white," he said.

The shirt-sleeved owner planted a thick glass and a pint of white wine before him, changed his coin.

"Nice day—"

"Nice day."

Fayard finished his pint, ordered another. A short man came in, ordered an absinthe which he poured himself, over a lump of sugar. Fayard noticed that he dosed his water with great care. Then the short man drew the owner aside, spoke to him. The "boss" shook his head, signifying ignorance with outspread hands. And the questioner went out.

"Say, big fellow," the owner addressed Fayard. "That man wanted to know who you were. He's a plain-clothes man, I guess."

Fayard, who was not a fool, shrugged.

"What's that to me?"

The owner smiled, shrugged in his turn—

"If it means nothing to you—it means nothing to me."

Poupon decided on a graceful and early exit. But he had already lingered too long. Two policemen met him at the door and, with scarcely a preliminary word, took him to a cab halted at the curb.

There, as Fayard had expected, was the short man.

The policemen placed handcuffs on Fayard's wrists, the coachman grunted and the cab picked up speed.

Poupon was not questioned. He was willing to be silent. After all, this might have nothing to do with yesterday's doings. He had heard before that men discharged from the military penitentiaries in Algeria were sometimes annoyed by the Paris police.

But he was compelled to admit that he was more than a little worried.

The short man was polishing the nails of his left hand on the palm of his right, and looked satisfied and very wise.

At the *prefecture de police*, the plain-clothes man suggested that Fayard alight. Flanked by his two resolute guards, who were aware of their own importance, he entered the building, climbed a wide, dusty stairway.

A door opened, and Poupon, more bewildered and quite depressed by now, was pushed into a chamber where he found a half dozen policemen, and several civilians in various attire. Big, tall fellows they were; two of them undoubtedly were teamsters.

The plain-clothes man addressed a dapper gentleman with a waxed mustache teasing his ears, who sat behind a plain desk and politely covered his open mouth when yawning.

"I picked this fellow in Belleville."

"Yes?" the waxed mustache quivered slightly.

Fayard was invited to moisten his right hand with a black preparation and to apply it to a sheet of paper. As no one asked him anything, he kept silent. The man behind the desk left the room with the palm-print, returning after a few minutes, with a smile of satisfaction.

"Let the others go," he ordered curtly.

The big men, relieved as to their own fate, regarded Fayard as if they would willingly have committed upon his person the deed of which they had been suspected.

One of the teamsters became angry.

"Don't I get compensation? Not even excuses? You pull me from my cart, make me lose three hours, risk my job? ——!"

A policeman placed his hand on the man's broad back.

"Move on, get out. Be thankful we had nothing on you, that's all."

"I know a friend of the chief of police," clamored the teamster. "We'll soon see whether it will pass like this—"

The policemen united to throw him out of the room. Then there were left only Fayard, his captors, the waxed mustache, and the stern guards.

"Sit down," Poupon was bidden.

The clerk was tearing up sheets of papers casually, throwing them into the waste-basket. These papers bore the palm-prints of the others who had been dismissed.

AFTER some minutes a tall gentleman with a serious mien and a well-trimmed black beard entered. He wore spats and chocolate-colored striped trousers. A frock coat molded his wide shoulders and slender waist. He reminded Fayard of a superior officer in civilian garb.

Behind him sauntered a short, bald-headed man. He was lean, and his baldness seemed to increase the bulk of his skull to an extraordinary extent. Long gray mustaches drooped from his sharp little nose, and behind gold-rimmed glasses glinted two tiny brown eyes, piercing as an auger-bit.

Fayard surmised that he was a detective.

Both took chairs.

"What is your name?" the bearded man asked.

"Fayard, Louis—"

"Note that, clerk. Alias?" And then, as Fayard hesitated, "For you have an alias, haven't you?"

"Poupon."

The gentleman smiled.

"You know why you have been arrested, don't you?"

"No, monsieur."

"You suspect why, however?"

"Because I am an ex-convict, from the military pen."

The bearded man pursed his lips, shrugged his shoulders.

"Inspector Arcin," he asked of the bald man, "will you explain to the suspect just why he was placed under arrest?"

Arcin drew a leather case from his breast pocket, chose a cigaret carefully.

"You allow me, monsieur?"

"Go ahead—go ahead."

Arcin lighted the cigaret, puffed reflectively.

"Last night—" he began, as if reciting by rote, "you and two companions, one perhaps five foot seven, the other about my own stature, halted before the enclosing wall of the Coupois villa, near Romainville. One of the other two threw his coat over the top of the wall, and you all entered the property of *Maitre* Coupois. You crossed a wooden bridge, over a brook. You entered the house with a duplicate key, made your way into the study on the first floor, and broke open the strong-box, which you located from previous information." He paused, smiled. "Is that correct?"

"I do not understand what you are speaking about, *monsieur*," Fayard protested.

"Not yet? While piling the money in some bag, I believe in a pillow-case, Maitre Coupois entered, held up a revolver to threaten you. Yes? You, Fayard, knocked the gun from Coupois' grasp, and overpowered him. One of your friends drew a knife. You protested, stating that it was not your intention to commit murder."

Fayard did not recall that he had expressed himself as clearly. But this might be a trick, and he continued to look squarely into the glass-sheltered pupils.

"They, your pals, overruled you. You fell back against the wall, and Coupois fled into his chamber. Your friends followed. They left him for dead. On the way back, one of your companions stopped by the brook, to attract the dog there and kill him."

"The dog is dead?" Poupon demanded unguardedly.

Arcin gave a nod of understanding to the other.

"The dog is dead," he admitted. "You climbed the wall and returned to Paris."

The black-bearded man now spoke up, gently.

"We know that you are not a murderer at heart. You were in bad company. You are probably sick of the whole business, after this trial. I promise to bring clemency to your case, to find you work after you serve the minimum sentence. We're after the professionals, the killers. We will locate them in any case. Help us out, save us time, trouble, and you will soon be at liberty."

"I don't know anything about it—" Fayard said stolidly.

"Let me warn you of one thing—this Coupois case will cause much newspaper talk. I am not certain that if the real culprits succeed in evading us altogether, your head—won't fall."

"I am entitled to a lawyer—" Fayard protested.

"You are. But we went at this case in a somewhat irregular manner, Louis Fayard. Results are expected of us. Believe me, there will be no difficulty in proving that you were in the villa. There are molds of your foot-prints, and the print of your hand on the wall, where you held yourself erect, after Coupois freed himself from your grasp."

"I'm innocent—" Poupon insisted, stubbornly.

"Be a fool, if you wish—" the black-bearded man turned to accept a message from a clerk who had just entered. He read the slip, turned to Arcin, "from the hospital. We can't count on Coupois any longer. He has just died." He paced the floor, looked at his watch.

"I give you fifteen minutes to decide, Fayard. Don't worry. Your pals wouldn't have waited this long to give you up. As you may have surmised, Coupois was still living this morning, when the gardener found him. He told us about the attack. Your friends are bunglers. They didn't kill him dead enough."

He turned his back and joined Arcin, who was examining several objects which Fayard could not quite discern. The two conversed in low tones.

Arcin suddenly held up a small cardboard box.

"Here's a signature," he announced. "We won't need Fayard after all."

"What is it?"

"A thumb-print, on a box of matches found on the stairs. Not perfect. But good enough if we have it on file."

Fayard recalled that Guignet had asked for matches on the way upstairs. So, that was all his precautions, the gloves, the bottles, had availed.

But the gloves, the gloves, how could a print mark through a glove? Arcin himself enlightened him:

"A hard pressure, due to his impatience when he ran out of matches. The end of the glove was worn—there are enough clear pores for identification."

"Arcin," the magistrate declared, "I had always heard you were up to your position. I believe it now!"

Arcin bared yellow teeth in a gratified grin.

"Method—that is all, method—I'll see if I can match this."

He disappeared, to come back before long, smiling contentedly.

"We have our man," he announced, "Guignet, Charles, alias Tallow-Head, residing at—," he gave the address of the small hotel Fayard had left that very afternoon. "I believe I can also name his accomplice—they are known to work together—Dupuy, also called the Kitten."

FAYARD was locked up in a cell in the building, awaiting the arrival of Guignet and Dupuy. He was dazed, and the future did not seem brilliant.

Late in the evening a stout chap of thirty-five or six entered the cell. He was clean-shaved, looked well fed, and the shabbiness of his garments was more willed than necessary. He shook hands with Fayard.

"I am Corvard," he introduced himself. "I am interested in your case and will handle it."

"I have no money."

"Bah, the Republic will take care of that —and in any case—I can afford a few luxuries. First, your case will be separated from that of the other two."

Corvard then informed his client of recent developments. The two Apaches, Lolla and the youthful Dede, had been plucked from the room. Tallow-Mug and The Kitten had shown fight. They had drawn their knives. But they had been overwhelmed by the force of police. In the scuffle a gardian of the law had been severely slashed about the arms. Then Corvard went on to advise Poupon:

"Let it be understood that you admit your presence in the villa, your participation in the robbery. There were several crimes committed by you boys last night. Scaling a wall, article 391 of the code, the use of a false key, article 398, the forcing of a strong-box, 398, and assassination, articles 296 and 297. Sounds pretty formidable, eh?

"Well, the last crime cannot be evoked against you. Coupois himself said that you tried to prevent it. That's an unbiased testimonial, eh? You were merely an accomplice, following, without quite understanding what you were doing, two experts."

"I understood quite well," Fayard declared, "I wanted the money."

Corvard gazed upon him long and pityingly:

"My boy, I said you didn't understand! For a burglar, you are disgustingly honest. Remember that it does not really matter what you thought. It is what you were presumed to think that counts. The newspapers, who as usual beat the police to information, have got hold of your name, know all about you.

"I got the dope from a reporter, who had received answers to his cables to Algeria, and telegrams to Besançon. I know you did not inform on your pals, but the reporters all think so. In another few hours, you will be able to read about your kindness of heart, how you risked the penitentiary for a horse you loved, how, disgusted with your friends' cruelty in killing a dog, you gave them up. See, your name already is in this edition."

He held out the paper. The headlines gave the news in brief, that Coupois had been murdered. It was related how the gardener, finding the dead dog at daylight, had suspected something wrong, had called the police, who broke in, and found Coupois weak from loss of blood, and dying, but still able to talk.

In smaller type, at the bottom of the column, it was reported that the efficient inspector of police, Arcin, had known from a palm-print on the wall that a very tall man had taken part in the attack—how, in fifteen minutes every policeman in Paris had been on watch for unidentified men of unusual height. How the big man, named Fayard, had been arrested while refreshing himself in a small café, and further that the suspect had given information that would lead to his accomplices within a few hours.

"Have Guignet and Dupuy confessed?" Fayard asked.

"They didn't need to. The money was found in the room. Lolla has been identified by several persons from the neighborhood of the villa as the former housekeeper

Dede was seen roaming about the place also."

Poupon was silent for a few minutes.

"Isn't it strange," he said abruptly, "that everything came out so soon. How did Guignet fail to think beforehand that Lolla might be identified."

"Nothing strange about it," Corvard explained. "There was a weak link, and the chain once broken, one end in the hands of Arcin, who is no fool, the whole fabric crumpled. Lolla was only identified after being captured with the others, one of whom had left finger-prints."

"To think that twenty-four hours ago the thing had not been done. And we are already caught—" Poupon groaned.

"I could improvise a splendid sermon, but you are already chastised," Corvard said. "Luck was against you. I, personally, have never seen anything work out as quickly. But let me talk, and follow my instructions. If you do, you won't be in the shade a year."

"The man with the black beard said if I didn't inform I might be pulled in with the others."

"The magistrate? Gendron? He was in a bad humor anyway. He has failed in two other cases this month. And he saw this one escaping like the others. He's a fussy man, likes his comfort. And he was awakened at 5:30, had to drive out to the villa, make his investigation and come back to talk to you, after eating his lunch standing up! Now that all is going well, he'll forget you were stubborn, and even help us out. He is much less to be feared than Arcin, who is never so happy as when snooping in dirty linen. He has too good a memory. If he meets you forty years from now, provided you both lived that long, he'll greet you by name, and remember every incident that happened today."

"If I ever get out of this scrape," Poupon said fervently, "Inspector Arcin will never see me again. I'll stick to the country for the rest of my life."

"Bucolic life has its good points," Corvard admitted, musingly, "but I much prefer seeing it from a train window than from the seat of a mowing-machine. How old are you, Fayard?"

"Twenty-eight."

"You'll be your own man at thirty. I promise you that. Get to bed now. Sleep on both ears. Let me do the worrying. I haven't lost a case in four years, and you won't be the bad break, I'm sure of that. By the way, ask after the prison cat!"

"Why?"

"Never mind why—say that you want to see the cat."

Seeing Corvard laughing, Fayard smiled also. And, when the keeper made his next round, Fayard asked the question.

"There's no cat on this floor," the keeper informed him.

In the morning, he was able to procure cigarets and newspapers. This was a *de luxe* jail for Poupon, who realized for the first time to the full that to be locked up on suspicion of a major crime was a distinction, while a petty offense was a stench in the nostrils of jailers.

AS CORVARD had foreseen, Fayard was given much space in the papers. They related how he had punched a sergeant for beating a horse, had turned against his companions for killing a dog and, not satisfied with truth and half-truth, plunged boldly into lies. There was talk of a rat that Fayard was said to have tamed while in solitary confinement in Algeria, of birds that fed from his hand to the astonishment of his guards. And to cap the climax, the reporters had learned that he had asked his keepers to have a cat to play with while in his cell.

He read the narration of the arrest of Guignet and Dupuy. The commissary of police had knocked on the door, asking that it be opened, "in the name of the law."

"We're sold," some one had been heard to say.

After his capture, Tallow-Mug had asked sneeringly:

"Where's Fayard?"

"At headquarters," Arcin, the inspector, had stated.

"He'll pay for this, this side of heaven," Dupuy, the Kitten, had concluded.

Dede was mentioned. He had been calm throughout. His chest had swelled with pride when he was escorted into the police car by two husky uniformed men. Fayard and the boy held the center of the stage, were the sympathetic persons in the crime. Coupois was dead, and in any case, had been far from an appealing figure. The robust Poupon, the slender, slangy Dede were better material than the commonplace Guignet and Dupuy, ordinary Apaches—better copy even than Lolla, who had had the whole arresting force laughing at her comical remarks on the way to the lockup.

Fayard saw that while Corvard was to defend him, a star of the bar was to assist the two assassins.

When Corvard turned up shortly before noon he was jaunty, confident.

"The public's with us, Fayard. And the opinion of the public counts for more than you'd think. If the keeper brings in a cat, don't kick it. That's my sole advice to you for the present."

"I don't like the others to think I sold them," said Fayard.

Corvard shrugged.

"There are a lot of things we don't like in this world," he declared.

Corvard stood up, faced the jury, yet managed to give the crowd of spectators on the graded benches near the wall the impression that he was also addressing them. Perspiration ran down his forehead, which he wiped with the flowing sleeve of his lawyer's gown. He was dynamic, ironical, pathetic. His voice rose to a boom, then ran on, swiftly, searching the weak spots in the reasoning, the sympathies, the prejudices of his audience.

"The attorney for the State," he cried, pausing, then repeating, "the attorney for the State, has spoken logically, has spoken charmingly, has evidenced a thorough knowledge of his subject. Apart from my position as lawyer for Louis Fayard, over there on the accused man's bench, I have to admire the attorney! After listening to his eloquent appeal, I almost became convinced that my client was guilty of all the crimes laid against him.

"I am in the plight of a man who has witnessed a miracle. According to logic, according to the law, Fayard is guilty. Yet he is not. He did all the things narrated to you, climbed a wall, broke into a house in the dead of night—nevertheless, he is not guilty."

Corvard paused and smiled.

"I am convinced he is not. I will convince you. There has been reference to article 381 of the penal code. It has not been cited in full. I will read it to you now, for I saw long ago on what the attorney for the State would base his attack. Article 381 seems a solid base. Let us see.

'Article 381, law of April 28th, 1832. Will be punished with life-long hard-labor individuals guilty of burglary committed with the reunion of the five following circumstances:

'One—If the burglary has been committed at night.

'Two—If it has been committed by two or several persons.

'Three—If the culprits or one of them bore arms, either visibly or concealed.

'Four—If they committed the crime by the breaking in, or climbing, or false keys, in a house, apartment, chamber or lodging inhabited or serving as habitation, or their dependences, or assuming the identity of a public servant, or the identity of an army officer, or of a civil official, or wearing the uniform or costume of an officer or of an official, or claiming to bear order, or presenting a false order, of civil or military authority.

'Five—If they committed the crime with violence or threat to use their weapons.' "

Corvard paused for breath.

"The attorney for the State has said that Fayard is guilty of all these crimes. Let us take item four. I could easily make any one admit that Fayard was dressed on the night of the murder as you see him now, plus a cloth cap. I may ask whether corduroy trousers, heavy workman's shoes, a blue belt and a gray shirt, topped by a brown coat, constitute the uniform or costume of any military officer, or civil official. The attorney could probably convince us, convince even Fayard that such was the fact. You laugh?"

Corvard paused, then said savagely:

"It's a good joke with us, but it's no laughing matter for Fayard, whose life, whose future depend on a decision to be made today!

"For the rest, Fayard is admittedly guilty—if the letter of the law is applied. In reality, let us see—"

He went on, sentimentalizing over Fayard as a foundling, pictured his lonely boyhood, lacking tenderness, lacking an unselfish adviser.

"At twenty-one, Fayard went into the army. Some of you have served. You are men, you have been young. Don't you remember clenching your fists? Yet Fayard had a record clear of all bad marks until a sergeant maltreated his horse. Fayard's responsibility when an animal is mistreated is not as complete as that of the perfectly normal man. His only companionship for many years has been that of animals. He loves them more than we do. A mania, if you will, but not a mania to be reproved. The army, rightly enough, can not make exceptions. And we have Fayard plunged, at twenty-three, in a penal camp.

"Do you quite understand this? Can you guarantee that you would come through five years of degraded association unscathed? Has any man here the formidable egotism to rise upon his hind legs and say—'I would endure—and I would come out wholesome?'

"In the penal camp Fayard met Guignet and Dupuy. They had been heroes in the camp, the élite of the place. And when Fayard found himself in Paris, lacking lodging, lacking money, he went to borrow from them, as he would have loaned them had cases been reversed. Is any man responsible for his friends? In our sphere, where the choice is ours to make, yes. In his, no!

"Burglary was a small thing to a man who had heard nothing but tales of murder for five or six years. Fayard had seen men killed for an unguarded move, for a word, at the camp. He knew nothing else—for remember that he is a country lad, is a child at heart, knows really nothing of the free world we know.

"COUPOIS himself, dying, had the charity to express a wish to see Fayard given a chance for life. And Coupois was not soft-hearted. Will you prove harder to touch?

"The crime committed, Fayard refused to accept the money. How many of us, wealthier, with a more solid bringing up, would refuse several thousand francs spread out upon the table, when the refusal would help no one, and make him the loser? And money to us, who have all our material comforts, would mean but an added sum in the bank. To Fayard it meant the things he had craved for all his life. And he refused.

"A man with such moral strength is a burglar? A man with such moral force should be sent into a rotten climate? And kept there until he died? The answer is yours to give.

"And then Fayard learned that the dog had been killed. What the murder of a man had not done, the killing of an animal did. Fayard realized that his friends were rotten to the core. Again, we are confronted by that peculiar affinity of his to animals. It puzzles us, until we remember its reason. Men who killed a dumb beast deserved neither pity nor loyalty. The authorities—" and here Corvard plunged into fiction, not shirking the necessity of it—"the authorities will say that they found Fayard, Guignet, Dupuy through deductions. Consider: The murder was committed at one in the morning. Before night all the culprits were jailed. How many crimes, committed years ago are still unsolved? Hundreds. The police is naturally shaping matters to flatter itself, perhaps also with a mistaken desire to protect Fayard. The truth is that Fayard helped society to get rid of two cold-blooded murderers.

"Has he failed even in thief's honor? No. But recall that he is not a thief; had, save through circumstances beyond his control, nothing in common with the others.

"I need not call attention to his face. You have already shown surprize. He is neither a murderer, nor a burglar. He belongs in the fields, on a farm. You can send him instead to the penal colony in South America to cut bamboo grass until the sun and the fever kill him. That is your choice. You can acquit him here, and send him before another tribunal, where the punishment will be more in keeping with the genuine offense. Stand up, Louis Fayard."

Fayard stood up, embarrassed.

"Is he to be a man or a slave? Is that giant body to be thrown away, discarded, like a cigaret stub? Then go home, and tell your wives, your neighbors, 'There was a big, strong fellow—whom we have sent to die. He had not done anything save follow men he had once called friends. He had repented, and helped justice. But—there was an article in the code, I forget just which, and that article said he had to go—so we let him go.' "

Corvard whirled toward his client.

"Louis, I have told them all. Hope."

Spent, Corvard sank into his seat, while the guards on duty moved through the spectators and demanded silence, an end to the applause that greeted the end of the plea. Several old women, many young women, all in search of a "kick," of a strong emotion, wept.

"Sit tight," Corvard whispered hoarsely. "You'll be let off."

Fayard nodded dumbly.

The attorney for the State made a halfhearted attempt to prevent sentimentalism being taken into account instead of evidence. It was so patent that he did not himself want a conviction that the spectators smiled.

Fayard was acquitted.

There was loud approval, excited conversation.

Then Poupon, who was not yet freed, having to answer for his actions before another tribunal, as mere misdemeanors, was surrounded by reporters. Even his bodyguards offered him cigarets and congratulated him.

Corvard, who had vanished to change his clothes, returned.

"I have an invitation to the races this afternoon," he said. "I'll lay a little bet for you. Don't worry about the rest."

"I won't," Fayard said, dully.

So that Fayard, who had received five years for a blow given in anger, was acquitted of a serious crime. He faced a new trial, still piloted by Corvard, who, confronted by a much less serious case, gave free play to his humorous tongue. Poupon was accused of damaging property, of entering a house without the owner's permission.

He was fined fifty francs, which Corvard paid, and given three months in jail. Such is human nature that he at first resented punishment. He had come to believe in his perfect innocence. Seekers after notoriety came to him before he was taken to prison to begin his term, and offered him exceptional salary to don a doorman's uniform after his discharge and stay in Paris. He would have accepted, longing as he did for an assured future, but Corvard was not enthusiastic.

"Listen, Fayard," he said, "You know I don't believe all the good of you that I have said. You're human. After all, you did do something not altogether square, didn't you? And kidding the public must have an end. You must get out of Paris. Go and get yourself hanged in any other place, but for heaven's sake, don't make a fool of me. You feel sure of yourself now. You just got away with a good deal. Gradually, you'll feel that you could get away with more. And the result would be that you'd face another jury. Do you think I'd have the nerve to defend you again? Do you think the same bunk would work twice? No, Fayard.

"You'd get salted for whatever you had done, and peppered on top of it for what you escaped this time. And how long would those people keep you at the wages they offer you? Until the novelty dwindled. Then, they'd get an old man, cheap, and kick you out. In life, as in gambling, there comes a time when a man must quit while luck's holding. Your time to quit is right now, to quit the past, and start anew. Don't let me think you're an ingrate, Poupon!"

"I understand."

"Moreover, Guignet and Dupuy have been condemned to death, that's true. But they may receive clemency from the President of the Republic. There's always a chance of that. Then they would be sent to Cayenne. One might escape. It's quite likely one would. If they knew where to locate you, how long would you live? In the audience at your second trial, did you see any one you knew?"

"I saw The Tadpole, and Arago, and two or three others I met at Guignet's."

"They seemed to like you, didn't they?"

Fayard quivered.

"They glared at me—"

"They'll make it their business to find you. They can't let you get away with what you're supposed to have done. Their existence depends on solidarity. And dealings with the police signed your death warrant. You know I'm telling the truth. I'll fix it with the police official to release you quietly, a day after your term ends, so that whoever is waiting for you won't see you. Then, with a hundred francs I'll procure for you, you'll get out of town."

"You're more than good, Monsieur Corvard—" Fayard faltered.

"Good-by. And behave yourself."

And Fayard was taken to prison.

A FEW weeks later Guignet and Dupuy were permitted to see each other, under guard, to play a game of cards.

They still hoped. Their plea for clemency was before the President of the Republic. Should he refuse to commute their punishment to life imprisonment, they would not know of it until the morning of the execution, a few short minutes at the most. They hoped, but they were always in the shadow of the grim machine.

As is usual with men in their plight, the keepers granted them many privileges.

"Trump—" said Dupuy, loudly.

"Right—take it," Guignet said; then, lower, "what's our chance?"

"Not so bright. They have it in for us."

Guignet picked up a trick, and glanced at Dupuy, who, in spite of the forced pretense of a matter-of-fact conversation, twisted his face as if about to weep.

"Ask the guard if he'll cut us for the keys!" Tallow-Mug suggested playfully. Then, dropping his voice once more, "Keep steady, Kitten—did you have any visitors yesterday?"

"The kid—Dede. He cried. He says he'll get Poupon when he's grown—"

"What's he doing now?"

"In reform-school. They let him off because it was Thursday. He knows nothing of what is going on, because they won't let him get hold of a paper. This was his first visit to me. He wasn't here long."

Guignet's cigaret moved to the right corner of his lips with the sad grimace he made—

"They can't spoil that kid—he's got too much guts—"

"Sorry, boys," the guard intervened, "but you're supposed to play cards, not to demoralize each other."

"All right, boss, we'll be good."

They played in silence for nearly half an hour.

"Dupuy, you must go back to your cell now," the guard declared. "What do you fellows want for dinner?"

"Whatever you say, boss."

"That's no way to talk," the guard chided them. "You boys will be pardoned and sent to Cayenne. Then, you'll be sorry you passed up good stuff when you could get it."

His lips trembled, and his eyes were moist.

Again, Tallow-Mug and the Kitten looked at each other with tense faces. They believed they understood. The date of execution must be near at hand.

"Don't worry, boss," the Kitten said. "We'll put in a good word for you when Peter opens the pearly gates."

"Joking—that's better," approved the guard.

Dupuy gone, Guignet sank on his cot. He would have liked to hasten the end. But he had nothing—no suspenders, no belt; and if he took the blankets, the guard would notice immediately. No, he must stick and face the music.

"They can't scare me—" he said, aloud.

He could not eat a morsel of food. He fell asleep. During the night he vaguely thought he heard hammering outside, far off. But it subsided quickly.

"Guess I'm nervous," he admitted to himself.

He sank down upon the cot again. Although he believed sleep impossible now, he dozed off again.

He was awakened by a hand upon his shoulder. It was almost daylight. Several men were in the cell, dressed in black. Guignet recognized his lawyer. The guard who had spoken to him yesterday was wiping his eyes constantly.

"I know—" Tallow-Mug said, trying to smile jauntily.

"Guignet, the President has rejected your plea. Have courage."

"You bet."

"A glass of rum? A cigaret?"

"Both, thanks," he accepted hoarsely.

He felt his lips tremble, and a queer itch to his nostrils. A stool was offered him, and, after slipping on trousers and shirt, he sat down. One of the black garbed men cut his hair, and with a few deft scissors' strokes, opened the shirt wider.

"I did my best, Charles," said his lawyer.

"I know it—" Tallow-Mug said, shaking the man's hand.

He drank his rum, smoked a cigaret. The priest came forward. He talked in a soft voice.

"You make me nervous—" Guignet told him. Then, he saw that the other seemed offended, and listened patiently. He could not think of anything to say, save to ask, "Where's Dupuy?"

"On the way out—he goes first."

"I'm glad of that. He gets sick easy—" Guignet approved.

The preliminaries gone through with, they took him from the cell, downstairs, and placed him in a small cell in a wagon.

"Are you there, Kitten?"

"Yes—"

"Good-by."

"Good-by."

Guignet sought for brave, comforting words. But time passed; then the narrow door opened.

"Come out, Guignet. Courage!"

The words of answer could not pass his contracted throat.

All about, soldiers with glistening bayonets, men on horseback. Behind these lines of uniforms, white faces.

Ahead, the guillotine, tall, dark red in the early light. Dupuy was up there, his head down on his chest. Then two men pushed the Kitten down, on the long plank.

Something thudded dully, a thud that reverberated deep in Guignet's entrails.

As in a dream, Tallow-Mug found himself where Dupuy had been standing a few seconds before. The priest mumbled in his ears, but he could not comprehend.

Silently, the men who had grasped the Kitten grasped Guignet. He caught sight of a particular face in the crowd, that of a young private of Infantry. The lad had closed his eyes, and his nose was pinched, whiter even than his face.

The others were pressing him down.

His brain accepted, but his body struggled, independent of his will.

He lost his footing—

Again the thud.

Guignet's body arched spasmodically, relaxed.

And the crowd dispersed slowly, still silent. The spectators were still under the spell of the nauseating emotion they had felt—and enjoyed.

Justice was done.

II

LOUIS FAYARD found work in Marseilles soon after his release from prison.

He had abandoned his original plan of going to Normandy. Lolla or Dede might have spoken of his intention to the others. So, instead of going north, he had taken the express to Marseilles. He drove a cart between a warehouse and the docks, taking wine barrels bound for the outside world.

He changed his name to Louis Baudin, and saw no reason why he could not be left alone to make a living peaceably. But the police had recognized him. He noticed that he was being watched. The thought made him uncomfortable. Any place within France would present the same problem.

He would have liked to go abroad, but he had the Frenchman's dislike of migration. He hesitated before the task of starting anew, of learning another language. The United States tempted him. Then South America.

The purveyor of a tramp steamer agreed to let him work his passage. The vessel was bound for New Orleans, then to the ports of South America. He could thus make his choice. His first doubts having vanished, he took pleasure in the thought of visiting new lands, where he would not be forever in fear of recognition.

Forty-eight hours before the departure of the steamer, he placed his cart in the shed, and his horses in the stable, with a sense of finality. He would never see them again. Upon request, his employer advanced him a sum of money equivalent to what he had earned, to be taken off his full salary at the end of the month. For Fayard had decided to give no inkling of his plans. He felt remorseful at leaving without a word of farewell.

But Poupon had learned to be careful.

On the way to his room that night he felt uneasy.

The same peculiar thirst which had gripped him and the others after the murder of Coupois, drove him into a small café. He stood before the zinc counter, sipping his wine and glancing casually at the row of bottles ornate with garish labels, at the lines of pewter measures hung neatly in graded arrangement before a large mirror which formed a sort of background and at the same time gave the establishment a false appearance of size.

How long he stood there, one elbow propping his chin, he could not have told. Perhaps a half hour, perhaps five minutes. But suddenly his eyes met those of another man, in the mirror. The man was standing in the street, before the plate glass window. Unconcerned by the jostling of passers by, he stared at Fayard's back. The vision did not last more than a few seconds, but nevertheless it engraved itself upon Fayard's consciousness. Always, he would be able to close his eyes and evoke the Apache face beneath the cloth cap.

The man was neither the Tadpole nor Arago, Guignet's closest friends after Dupuy, but Fayard knew he had seen him sometime in the past. He turned casually, hoping to obtain a clearer view, but the face had vanished.

Coincidence? Perhaps. Marseilles was

not far from Paris and many of the Apaches left the capital for short stays between jobs, until things had quieted down.

Fayard took his wine to a small, round table in a corner, seated himself to face the door. He intended to remain where he was all night, if necessary, rather than go into the street where the man was waiting for him.

Sailors talked noisily. A fight started, men jostled him, upset his glass. He scarcely heeded these incidents. To give himself an apparent reason for his prolonged stay, he drank and read newspapers.

Midnight came. Many of the customers left the café. The bartenders yawned, and the youngest was sent out to lower the shutters. Even the flies seemed to settle for the night, on the walls, on the ceiling.

Then Fayard was alone.

"We close at one," the owner said, kindly. "Have a last drink on the house. Do you live in the neighborhood?"

"Yes."

The owner, wishing to secure a good customer, brought a bottle to the table, and his late dinner—thick sausage, cheese. Fayard might stay a while longer, as his guest. Fayard stayed, dreading the time for departure. He was not armed, save for his fists. The man out there probably carried a knife, perhaps a gun. He longed to place himself under the protection of the police. But he knew that the issue must be faced some time.

He resolutely rose, and opened the door.

"Good night," he called, as a man cries "help!"

He paused on the sidewalk, looked up and down the street. No one was in sight. He walked away from the café. After fifty paces, he whirled abruptly. A man had detached himself from the shadows of a doorway, and was coming toward him. Fayard knew the attitude well—slumped shoulders, quiet step, head thrust forward.

Unwilling to reveal his lodgings, Fayard turned toward the Port. He put his hands in his pockets, and whistled softly. At the first corner, he waited.

But the Apache did not come close—unwilling, no doubt, to act in such an open spot. Fayard no longer desired to bring things to a swift conclusion. Rather did he want to prolong the pursuit. Several times, in a conveniently dark place, he might have waited. But when he heard the other increase his speed, he lengthened his own stride, and walked on, and on, seeking the lights. The follower seemed the calmer of the two. His attitude proclaimed intensity of purpose, illimitable patience.

Coming to the Ship-Basin, a desert of pavement and wharves, with clusters of lights every fifty yards, Fayard almost broke into a lope. The place was lonely, and he had thought that the other man had waited for him to halt.

It was then that the idea came to him. Why not go to the ship that was to bear him away to safety, beg the hospitality of his acquaintance, and thus escape? What did the few belongings in his room matter? He paused briefly to obtain his bearings, then hastened forward.

His elation was not of long duration. An immense heap of wooden boxes piled on a wharf left but a narrow lane between it and the water of the Basin. The pile stretched on for several hundred feet, and Fayard heard the nearing footsteps of his pursuer.

He looked about quickly, seeking the once hated sight of a police cap. But policemen did not like narrow places any more than he did, and watched from a safe distance. Poupon was forced into the lane. On one side the boxes rose twenty-five feet, on the other gleamed the water of the harbor, six feet below the quay. The Apache would soon come around the corner. Fayard was trapped.

He removed his coat and cap, threw them into a narrow space between boxes, out of sight.

THEN he lowered himself over the edge of the wharf, felt the water about his ankles. He let go, and sank silently.

The water was cold, but not uncomfortably so. Fayard dove, swam under water, coming up cautiously for air, close to the wall. He looked upward, and saw, several yards away silhouetted against the paler sky, the head and shoulders of the man who had been following him.

He waited until the head disappeared, until he heard the steps receding, then struck out for the other side of the Basin, where the steamer was anchored.

He thought he recognized the squat funnel and stumpy masts, swam to the wharf, caught a rope, and hoisted himself to firm footing. He ascended the gangplank and looked for the watchman, who would awake his friend. But the watchman was nowhere to be seen, unless, perhaps, he was one of a group of men talking animatedly near another steamer. He smiled. It was always the way—whoever heard of a night watchman being near when needed?

He considered the situation. Suppose he went to the group, wet, lacking coat and cap, it would arouse suspicions, demand explanations rather difficult to make plausible. But if he returned to his room, he might meet Guignet's pal once more. No, it was better to stay here.

He entered the deck-house, descended a companionway, striving to recall which door led to the room occupied by his friend. At random, he knocked. And, when there was no answer, he opened the door and scratched a match. No one. But there were bunks.

Fayard closed the door, removed his clothing which he hung on the wall to dry. He rubbed his body with a coarse woolen blanket. A delightful lassitude overcame him. What was the harm? Sleeping here was not a crime. If the rightful occupant came back, he could make it clear that stealing was not his intention.

In the morning, he would explain and apologize. He was too tired to think what the explanation would be. He had been chilled and now felt warm. He pulled the blankets of the top bunk open, climbed in, covered himself.

"Not so bad—not so bad."

He grinned sleepily into the darkness and fell asleep.

"*Mana—mana—woo!*"

THE shrill call rang across the clearing, echoed beneath the tall trees of the forest. The gang foreman repeated the call, head lifted to the sun, eyes closed as if to concentrate all his strength within his voice:

"*Mana—mana—woo!*"

Forty negroes hitched to the two long ropes sprang forward with a united effort, shoulders forward, the muscles rising swiftly beneath the black skins. Under the first savage tug, the three-ton log of mahogany slid forward a few feet; then, its mass settling into a depression of soil, necessitated rest—and a new effort. Grunts and panting breaths rose from the sweating laborers.

"*Mana—mana—woo!*"

Monotonously, the call rang out, varied by an occasional "*bete-bete,*" when the headman called for caution. All day long, the foreman had lifted his face to the sun and howled his commands. And now that the moon was rising, a slender crescent, the last log was on its way to the dried bed of the Agneby River, where when the sky dripped rain in October, it would float with other logs to the lagoon near the coast.

Louis Baudin leisurely filled his pipe .

Three years in the tropics, in the moist climate of the Ivory Coast, had changed Poupon. He was lean, his shoulders had lost much of their massiveness, his features had disengaged themselves from the heavy tissues of youth. Under the thick helmet, the lower part of his face showed tanned almost as dark as the hides of his men, as dark as his forearms and hands.

But, with the lessening bulk, far from diminishing the impression of strength, had come the suggestion of immense muscular power, of dry, dynamic force. In laced boots and khaki trousers, with the sweat-soaked shirt opened at the throat, Poupon looked well.

His face had changed also. He was no longer a boy. His eyes, honest and steady always, were now resolute. Today, the sight of a slinking figure on his heels would not drive him into headlong flight. When he spoke four hundred negroes did his bidding. He was hewing out of the forest of West Africa huge logs, that were sent all over the world, to embellish mansions, to enter into the building of enormous transatlantic liners. In the struggle against the climate, under the tremendous difficulties encountered before the logs went down the river, he had found himself.

He had awakened late in the morning, that day long ago when he had sought shelter in the ship's cabin. He had soon learned that he had made a mistake, that he had boarded the wrong vessel. But the steamer already was out to sea.

The captain was good-natured. He accepted his explanation—and set him to work shoveling coal. It had not been a pleasure trip for Poupon, who longed for the open air, and found within the iron flanks of the ship sensations identical to those experienced behind the bolted doors of the prison.

He became ill.

That had been between Dakar and Grand

Bassam. In the latter port, metropolis of the Ivory Coast at the time, he had been carried ashore, to the whitewashed hospital. When he was well enough to walk, the steamer was gone, back to Marseilles.

The doctor in charge, who, in addition to his assignment as military surgeon to the small native garrison, undertook the duties of civilian doctor, loaned him pocket money, permitted him to use the hospital as quarters until he could be sent home or found some occupation within the colony.

Baudin, as he continued to call himself, tried trading, stood behind a counter in a small store. He did not like this.

At length, when he was about to accept a passage to France and face the consequences of such a move, he had met Laroche, the timber-cutter.

Laroche had just launched out into the timber game, having but recently thrown up his position as manager for a big trading firm. He was in town looking for an assistant, to help him handle the hundreds of blacks needed for the cuttings he had obtained from the Government, on the Agneby River. A difficult task, as the majority of the young men were tied by long term contracts to their firms, and those who were free were not likely to be worth much as aids.

Between Laroche and Baudin esteem had been immediate and strong. Laroche could not afford to pay a big salary, could not even guarantee a small salary. His money was tied up. Baudin was willing to chance the success of the enterprize, to work without pay, for his board and clothes.

He had gone up bush with the timber-cutter.

From the first, he had liked the solitude. The negroes could scarcely be compared with men of his own color. Their very lack of civilization assured him a freedom from questioning. They accepted him at face value, and rated him highly.

Poupon had done hard manual labor in the Algerian camps. He recalled the mistakes committed by the non-coms., and avoided driving his men too hard. He knew that a few compliments, rightly uttered, did more than severe punishment. He appealed to the blacks' pride. He selected special crews, which vied against each other for supremacy and small cash prizes. No race is dead to the feeling of competition. When the laborers of other cutters, disturbed by the trouble makers of their own color fresh from Senegal, struck for more rice, more rum, more wages and less work, Baudin's men stayed at their task. Others went into bankruptcy; Laroche thrived.

THE small hut, covered with palm leaves, gave way to a well constructed bungalow of brick and cement, with a comfortable veranda. After the first sale, fifteen hundred tons of choice timber, Laroche, instead of going to France to spend his earnings, sunk the money into the building of a narrow gauge rail, which would facilitate the transportation of the logs.

Once a year, the two men floated down on the rafted logs, from their cuttings to the lagoon, and on to Grand Bassam.

The long days and nights spent face to face brought them into a very close friendship. There arose the occasional quarrels inevitable between men isolated from their kind, and easily irritated. They cursed each other. Baudin threatened to throw up his job and quit the cutting. But they always ended by laughing and dropping the controversy.

The log that Baudin was now watching swayed and pitched on the little truck, and finally was rolled down the slope to the river bed, settling between two giants of six tons each. Work was over for the season.

"Tonight," said Baudin, "you boys get extra rum, extra chop. You work fine."

On the way back to the bungalow, the negroes followed him through the forest, shouting and prancing like children, happy at the compliment, happier yet at the thought of the extra rum.

He found Laroche on the veranda, smoking and sipping his usual vermouth appetizer, feet in slippers, and his big hairy arms emerging from the thin underwear.

"Last log in the river bed, Leon—" Baudin declared happily.

"I just got rid of the last on number two cutting," Laroche announced in his turn. "The Kroomen will be up tomorrow, and the rains will be on us in another week."

Baudin went into his room. A tub, filled with lukewarm water, was waiting for him. His servant, a lad of sixteen, garrulous and somewhat of a thief, but devoted to him nevertheless, had spread upon his bed a full suit of white drills, clean socks, clean shirt, and a pair of soft leather slippers.

He caught Baudin's garments as they were removed, emptied the pockets, then placed them in the laundry bag, finishing this in time to fetch a big sprinkling can before Baudin had splashed in the tub to his full satisfaction.

"Shower, massa."

Baudin dressed. The boy brought him a cigaret, scratched a match, held it out. The former Poupon inhaled joyfully. He felt at ease, relaxed. He mentally thanked fate for directing him to such a paradise.

"All right, boy. Put gin and bitters—veranda table."

"Yessah."

Baudin went into the living-room, which also served as dining hall. Plain furniture made of mahogany, unstained, unpolished. On the walls hung framed photographs of Laroche's various cuttings, and chromos surmounting calendars of various steamship lines and coast trading companies. It was a typical bush bungalow living-room, save for one detail—a long bookcase occupied a side of the room.

Laroche had received a good education until he had run away from home to seek adventure. Landing at seventeen in Senegal, he had traded on the Senegal River, in the far countries of the immense Sudan, for many years. But his love of books had remained. As soon as his timber business gave him a fixed residence, as soon as the returns came in, he had sent for cases of books. He was thus able to produce authors from Homer to the latest sensational novelist.

Until his association with Laroche, Baudin had read but little. His reading had ended with the last school-reader. His inspection of newspapers had been casual. At first he had been bored when Laroche, refusing to talk, had become engrossed in a book. Then, upon Laroche's suggestion, he had picked up a volume of Dumas. Laroche had chosen wisely. Baudin had sat up half a night following the tempestuous d'Artagnan through his glamorous escapades.

The taste once acquired, it was an easy matter to progress to Hugo. Balzac at first made Baudin flounder, then he understood more than the mere printed words. Deftly guided by Laroche, he opened Flaubert. Salammbo astonished him, stirred his curiosity concerning ancient peoples. After three years, Baudin had learned much of the world through the printed page. He accepted his early trials without bitterness now, with understanding. Reading gave him the perspective he needed.

Tonight, he picked up a *Mercure de France,* which contained the conclusion of a serial story, and went out to join Laroche. He sank into a willow chair, placed his feet on the railing, and settled down for a quiet half hour before dinner.

"Eh, Louis, put that magazine down," Laroche suggested.

"Why? What's on your mind?"

"I had a telegram from Dabou today, or rather a cable, relayed from Grand Bassam to Dabou."

"From Grenelles?"

Grenelles was a French firm to whom Laroche sold part of his timber output each year. There had been little personal discussion between the two men. Baudin never received mail, and he had understood that Laroche was not on good terms with his relatives. So that he naturally believed the cable to be a business message.

"No. From my father," said Laroche. "It's been twenty years since I saw him. When I went to France on leave, he would not receive me. He tells me that my mother is—ailing. He is willing to let me show up home. Says he is glad I have settled down and am making good. Talks as if I were sixteen instead of near forty. Must have cost him a lot to send all that literature over the wire. He wants me to come and see mother—"

"Yes."

"What would you do?"

"Go."

"That's what I thought. But, could you handle everything here? I know you could, but won't it be too much of a strain on you alone?"

"Not at all. I guess I know enough by now not to get cheated by the buyers."

"Good. You'll need power of attorney to act in full capacity," Laroche said. "Sign these. I'll get them stamped and countersigned by the administrator in Dabou."

Baudin took the papers, signed them, glancing casually at the first lines. He started.

"What's that?" he exclaimed.

Laroche grinned—

"What?"

"You wrote, 'my partner'—' "

"Aren't you?"

"I thought I was working for you."

"In three years how much salary have I paid you?"

"I didn't ask for it. I get my expenses from the ready cash."

"LISTEN," Laroche said. "You started up here when I was struggling to keep my head above water. This place is as much yours as mine. If you were more careful, you'd have noticed that I had you sign papers before now. For the last two years, no deal has been passed without your name on the contract. Now, I need you even more than you need me. You have a way with the natives—you know you have."

"I'd sooner be on a salary."

"I want you to assume your share of responsibility as well as profit. By the way, do you know how much you are worth, clear money, not counting assets here, of which you own half?"

"No."

"As near as I can figure off hand, 360,000 francs."

Baudin mopped his brow, and was silent.

"I knew I could surprize you some day." Laroche seemed to be enjoying himself immensely.

"I can't let you do it, Leon."

"You're sensitive about taking anything from me. You're like a kid. You think if I get the idea you worked so hard for yourself, I won't admire you any more. Isn't that it?"

"No."

"What, then?"

"I've been to prison."

"I know that."

"Who told you?" Baudin asked in amazement.

"No one. But when a man near thirty seems to recall but twenty years of his life, you can be pretty certain that the rest of the time was spent in jail, or in an asylum, or somewhere that's not considered creditable. You don't act madly. So it must have been prison." Laroche lifted his hand to halt Baudin's speech. "Don't be an ass, Louis. Don't say, 'You know I've been a convict, and yet you tolerate me near you.' That's old stuff. To be quite frank with you, I was sick with curiosity for a while, as to why a fine fellow like you had got into a mess. How long did you serve?"

"Five years in Algeria, for a military crime. Three months in France for what they called larceny, or house-breaking, or something. I am Louis Fayard."

"Fayard—"

"Fayard of the Coupois case."

"Which may mean a great deal to you, but—and it may hurt your vanity—does not evoke anything to me. To be quite fair, I must say I have been at times seven and eight months without seeing a newspaper." Laroche shrugged. "Larceny—I have sold products to poor, ignorant natives at exhorbitant rates. I have sold gin, made of raw alcohol, red pepper, and water. I was stealing from them just as much as if I had taken money from the pockets they didn't have. I'm ashamed of it now. I should have been jailed. Let's say that you served jail for the two of us, and you see I still owe you a lot. I'm going to France next week. You handle the business here. We're partners in full." Laroche thrust the glass of gin and bitters into Baudin's hand. "Here—I know better than to allow you to squeeze my fingers when in the throes of emotion. Here's to our success!"

Success!

The seasons rolled by, the rain poured down, the Agneby River swelled, and hundreds of logs went down with the flood. The hammer-mark, "L. B." (Laroche-Baudin) became well known. The Agneby Mahogany was excellent. Later, the partnership obtained more government grants, some on the railroad, several in the Bandama region.

Laroche, whose parents died soon after his trip to France, found himself possessed of a belated filial love. He nursed many regrets, and worked as a man drinks—to forget.

Baudin retained his almost magical power over the natives. When the Government permitted the recruiting of laborers from the inland possessions of the Republic, Koroko in particular, he was one of the first to see the splendid opportunity. He went up country, north of Bamako, and brought back half a thousand Korokos, small in stature, brownish in hue, but wiry and willing to work for an assured rice ration and a small daily stipend.

Once every eighteen months he took a trip to Europe, for a vacation. He kept away from Paris, living in Belgium or England.

He was on such an excursion when the Great War broke out. He enlisted as a volunteer. Too late for the early campaign in Belgium and northern France, he saw the first battle of the Marne, and later was sent to the Dardanelles, a sergeant of Senegalese *Tirailleurs*.

There luck seemed to abandon him. A Turkish bullet struck him below the right knee and sent him to the hospital. Three days later the Senegalese regiment was decimated in a fierce but ill-advised attack upon a dingy village, leaving sixty-five per cent. of its privates and almost all its white leaders upon the field.

When Baudin was released, he was free of war service for all time. His right leg was shorter than the left, and he would always limp slightly. He was not very sad about it. He had been willing to serve France, but the call of the African coast was luring him.

He went back to the cuttings. Laroche had gone, called to the colors. He had left behind an overseer who had lined his pockets, but had left the work to go as it pleased. Laroche-Baudin was in a bad way.

Baudin plunged into the work, took advantage of the immense opportunity. Mahogany was needed. The prices were high, while the cost of native labor had not yet felt the general inflation. In a year, he had recouped his losses, and was awaiting Laroche's return eagerly.

But Laroche never came back. He was one of the fourteen hundred thousand Frenchmen to die. He was reported killed, April 18, 1917, during the spring offensive.

The loss of his partner was a hard blow. Baudin suffered intensely. Laroche had been the only genuine friend he had ever had, and he felt for many months as if part of him had died. The name "Laroche" remained, through Baudin's expressed wish, on the letter-heads of the company. The hammer-marks were not changed, and the now famous "L. B." still stood out conspicuously on the bleaching logs awaiting shipment on beaches from Sassandra to Assinie.

BAUDIN'S hair grayed. He was still just and kind to his white employees, good to the negroes, but he had developed into a sort of hermit. The coast business was trusted to younger men, and Baudin spent his days in the bungalow in the bush, between his books and his bottles, going out only for exercise and the necessary inspections, or again for a short hunting trip, when boredom hung too heavily upon him.

The managers of his cuttings were at the same time fond and afraid of him. He had developed an unerring eye for detail, could scan a sheet of figures and point out the lone mistake, could cast a glance over a lot of logs and estimate the tonnage. It became generally known that the third serious mistake was the last made in his employ. He discharged a man for beating the negroes after two warnings, and forgave another for juggling accounts to the extent of fifty thousand francs.

Through his accumulating fortune he was a power in the colony. Even the governor waived his usual rule for him, the rule that his visitors should be made to wait at least fifteen minutes before an interview.

But he was not altogether inhuman. An attack of bilious fever forced him to seek the doctor in Grand Bassam. The medical man recommended a trip to France—"coming up for air," as he expressed it. Baudin decided to obey him. The past was far behind. His face was changed. He was older, a decorated veteran of the war, and the matter of dress counted for much.

He lived in a luxurious hotel in Paris. He smoked expensive cigars, rode in his own motor-car. It was a new Paris to him, the Paris of lights and pleasures. As a wealthy timber-cutter, an interesting savage from the jungle of the Ivory Coast, Baudin had many acquaintances.

He followed gay parties to Montmartre, to Belleville, fearlessly entered the dens of the underworld. He listened to his self-appointed guide, a young man named Auguste Chimar, who explained to him the customs of the Apaches. Baudin thought the breed had degenerated since his days. The clean-cut prowler, such as Guignet and Dupuy had been, were not to be seen. The mechanical pianos of the dance-halls had given way to American negroes and their jazz music. More than half of the customers were Anglo-Saxons, tourists. The Apaches themselves imitated the sleek-haired youth of the palaces and fashionable dancing places, keeping however the taste for bright neckwear.

Chimar, who owned an exploitation in Morocco, suggested that Baudin come down and see the new protectorate, hinting of great opportunities for a man with ready cash.

So, before returning to the Coast, Louis Baudin took the trip. A few weeks after Chimar had left Paris, Baudin was standing on the cement platform of the little railroad station, in the deep blue shadow cast by the shed roof. The Moroccan sky brought memories of his Algerian sojourn.

He awaited news of his host, Monsieur Chimar, whose mansion was several miles away, and who had probably missed the train's arrival.

A GRAY monster on wheels, an enormous touring car, flashing with polished brass and plate glass, slid with a satisfied purr before the station.

The chauffeur, in a white uniform, bent over the side.

"Monsieur Baudin?"

"In person," agreed Baudin, with a smile.

"You come on behalf of Monsieur Chimar?"

"Yes. He begs you to forgive him for not coming himself. Something unexpected happened." The young man threw open the door of the car.

Baudin then noticed that the white uniform bore a number over the chest. The chauffeur was therefore a military prisoner, rented out by the Government to Chimar. Yet he was not only good looking, with deep, dark eyes and firm features, but he appeared clean, wholesome, without a trace of the vices which mark so deeply many of his type. The fact that he was employed as a chauffeur was ample proof that he was trustworthy.

Without analyzing his reasons, Baudin circled the car:

"It rides easier up front," he suggested.

"As you please."

A native threw Baudin's bags into the back of the car, saluted low the two-franc bill handed him as reward. The auto slid forward.

The road unwound swiftly. A small caravan of natives, urging laden donkeys, scampered off the road and shook menacing hands.

"You travel swiftly, young man," Baudin remarked.

The chauffeur grinned. Slumped easily in his seat, hands nonchalantly thrown over the wheel, he seemed part of the machine. His enjoyment of the dizzy speed was obvious. Baudin remembered his own period of service in the Algerian camp and experienced a pang almost like belated envy. What would such comparative freedom have meant to him!

"What's your name?" Baudin asked.

"Lucien—"

"Lucien—" Baudin hesitated in question.

"Lucien Mongrain."

The chauffeur sounded the horn violently. A group of men scattered to the sides of the road. Baudin caught a glimpse of a man in uniform, a sergeant, with a service revolver at his belt.

"Military prisoners?" he offered.

"Yes. Crooks, burglars, scum," said Mongrain. He laughed softly. "I should know, I'm one of them."

There was little humility in his tone. If there was sarcasm it was directed less at the prisoners or himself than toward the wealthy man who had condescended to sit beside him.

"Have you served long?"

"About two years. I'm due for liberation in a couple of weeks." Mongrain was hardened to his lot, and when he saw that Baudin was interested in him, did not hesitate to talk. "They took me out of a reform-school to put me into the army during the war. When it was over I somehow found myself here. I gues[illegible] I belong with those who are out of luck."

"What do you care—" Baudin consoled him, "You'll be through in a few days."

"Yes. With this. But what after? I am a good chauffeur, as long as I cost about a franc a day—being a prisoner. After do you think Monsieur Chimar will employ me? No, he'll get another prisoner." He added cautiously, "You needn't tell him, though. He's not half bad, and he's certainly made it easy for me—" he caught Baudin's surprized glance— "That's right. You wouldn't anyway. You seem to be a regular guy."

He had slowed down to a moderate speed, in no haste now to end the conversation.

"I have only two weeks to go, and I won't have any more if I can keep away from the sergeants. If I get back into a camp, even for a day, they'll frame me up to stay another couple of years. They're great at it. You can't imagine, Monsieur Baudin."

Baudin could not be presumed to imagine. But Fayard knew what the man whose term was about to expire had to endure the last few days.

"How old are you, Mongrain?"

"Twenty-four."

"I understand you have no relatives. You spoke of a reform school as home. Where are you going after leaving here?"

"I'm going to Paris. I have friends there."

Baudin was struck by this parallel to his own life.

"What kind of friends?"

Mongrain shrugged.

"Good fellows."

"Crooks?"

Mongrain smirked:

"Of course not. A fellow meets such refined persons down here, you know."

"I didn't mean to offend you. I just wanted to know what you planned to do." He felt strangely interested in Mongrain and didn't want to lose touch with him. "Do you know where I come from?"

"Sure. The boss was talking about you in the back of the car, to another fellow. You're from the Congo or some other nigger place—"

"Did you ever hear of the Ivory Coast?"

"Yes. Near your place?"

"I live there. Do you think you'd like it?"

"Me? It all depends."

"I'm serious. I'd start you at three hundred francs a month and keep. That isn't a glittering proposition on the surface. But I need young men—and I prefer them seasoned."

"I'm that, all right."

"You wouldn't have a soft snap. Bossing negroes is harder than driving a car. The West Coast is not a health resort either."

"There's elephants and all that sort of thing down there."

"That's not what I'm hiring you for. I'm telling you frankly I won't stand for nonsense. I'm doing you no favor. It's a fifty-fifty proposition. I give you a start, and you give me a workman."

Mongrain rubbed his chin, puzzled.

"It isn't a —— of a merry place, from what you say!"

"You're not a kid any longer. I offer you a chance."

"I take it."

"Before I go away, I'll leave you sufficient cash to equip yourself properly, and pay your passage down. After leaving here, I'm going back to Paris, then down to Bassam. I'll see you at my place in a couple of months. If you change your mind between times, you don't need to return anything to me. I can stand the loss—and it might help you to another start."

"Don't worry. I'll be there," Mongrain assured.

He applied the brakes. Chimar was standing by the roadside, and waving his hat at Baudin.

"MASSA LUCIEN, he is for his room?"

"No, massa," the boy replied. "He no come yet."

"All right. Put bottles for veranda table, savvy?"

"Yessah."

The boy went out, and Baudin heard him whistling on his way to the cook-shack.

Where was Mongrain, Massa Lucien as the boys called him? It was almost completely dark outside, and there was nothing to hold him this late on the cutting.

Baudin stood before the mirror, fastening his tie. He glanced at himself, grinned sheepishly. He realized that he was worrying over a young man old enough to take care of himself, and who certainly knew the ways of the world. And with big Koula, the Bambara foreman, Mongrain was safe. Koula could scent danger before anything was visible to the human eye.

"This," Baudin decided, "is foolish sentimentality."

As foolish as taking the boy on his own cutting, sheltering him in his own bungalow, granting him Laroche's room, instead of testing him first in the loneliest and most disagreeable cutting in the holdings, as was his custom with green men. Baudin had remorselessly taken men from good homes and thrown them against hardships from the start. Was it logical to take an individual from a penal camp and pamper him like a baby? But Baudin knew that he felt closer to Mongrain than to any other, so near had the young man's life been like his own.

Baudin strolled into the living room, where he picked up a book. Then, slowly, he went to Laroche's old room. He pushed the door open, and glanced in.

He shrugged in annoyance. What was the matter with Lucien? He had been here two full months, and had made no effort to make himself at home. Baudin had given him his choice of pictures to hang up, yet the walls were bare. Mongrain's trunks were piled in a corner. The dressing table beneath the mirror was bare of toilet articles. The room was cold, cheerless as if unoccupied.

"He's got his mind made up that he won't stay," Baudin mumbled.

He spoke from experience. A new man accepts his quarters, spends several nights in them. If he likes the life, he proceeds to make his room a home, by degrees, decorates it according to his particular tastes. If the bush life palls on him, he keeps his trunks packed as a subconscious protest against staying in a place he does not like. As a rule, when confronted with such an attitude, Baudin took the man aside, and frankly offered to release him and pay his passage home. It was better to accept the initial loss than to burden an organization with a slacker.

The timber-cutter chided himself for not having the courage to follow this course with Mongrain. He explained the matter to himself in a roundabout way—what would happen to Mongrain should he be sent home? The truth was that he had become attached to Lucien more deeply than he cared to admit, in spite of the fact that the young man's behavior toward him had been cold.

Mongrain was respectful almost to exaggeration. But underneath, there was a strain of antagonism that Baudin sought in vain to define. It was as if Mongrain had something he would have liked to say, and did not dare speak. At all times, even in the comfortable hours after dinner, he was reserved. Baudin had learned nothing more of him than he had during the first brief interview. And he had refrained from questioning.

He glanced at his watch. It was 7:15.

"I wonder what—" he began. Then, hearing the sound of shod feet outside, he hastily left the room, unwilling to be caught intruding.

Mongrain passed him with a short greeting, and Baudin heard him splash in the tub. A few minutes later, the young man emerged in clean whites, shaved and ready to sit down to dinner. Baudin, in spite of himself, beamed approvingly.

"What did you do tonight that kept you so late?" he asked, as he served himself from the proffered dish, held by the boy on the left side.

"Went down with Koula to the creek—fishing."

"With dynamite?"

"Yes."

Baudin scowled—

"Who threw the cartridges?"

"I did."

"I told you not to, Lucien. Not knowing much about the stuff, you'll blow your hand off some day. Take your quinine."

Mongrain obediently swallowed the two white pills laid on his napkin.

"That's the way it goes," Baudin grumbled. "If I had not reminded you, you wouldn't have taken it. Then you'd have had fever—and blamed the climate instead of your own —— carelessness."

"Yes, M'sieur Baudin."

"How's the work getting on at the cutting? I didn't have time to run out. Had a lot of papers to attend to."

"I don't know exactly. I left before it was all over. I think five logs—"

Baudin flushed:

"You're trying—" he began, and then broke off abruptly. "How do you expect anyone to work, if you, the white man, shirk?"

Mongrain lifted his eyebrows with a hint of insolence, but said nothing. He went on eating. Baudin felt anger rising in spite of a desperate attempt to control himself.

"Meat?" the servant asked, presenting the dish.

Baudin took another portion.

"Lucien, I watched you giving out the rice this morning."

"I know it," Mongrain informed him dryly.

"Is that why you did exactly what I told you not to do? I told you to give the laborers six hundred grammes each, one cup of three hundred grammes of American polished, one cup of native rice."

"I recall that, yes."

"And you gave some of the men two cups of American polished, and the others two cups of native. Do you think that I give you instructions for the pleasure of hearing myself talk?"

"No."

"Do you know that the men to whom you give only polished rice will get sick in the long run? That unless there is a proportion of husks in rice, it will develop *beri-beri?*"

"Yes?"

"Do you know that the Government questions sickness and death among the laborers? That there are fines to pay, and indemnities to families? Are you trying to anger me?"

MONGRAIN carefully stripped a piece of lamb of gristle.

"Lucien, are you trying to get me to fire you?" Baudin challenged.

"Yes, I am."

The young man met Baudin's glance defiantly. The timber-cutter, who was no longer accustomed to have men speak so boldly to him, became flushed under the tan on his cheeks. His nostrils quivered. He grinned bitterly.

"If you were just an ordinary sort of a fool," he said, vehemently, "you know I'd soon put the toe of my boot where your back ends, and throw you out."

Mongrain laid his fork upon the plate, propped his chin in the palm of his right hand.

"Go on, Monsieur Baudin. I've just had three years of it; a little more or less won't hurt my dignity."

"I'm sorry," Baudin apologized, "but you anger me."

"I realize that," Mongrain assented insolently.

"I know what ails you, Lucien. You think this place is too slow. You want lights, women—Paris, in a word. That's why you're trying to break away, even at the cost of being rude to me."

"I have reasons for wishing to leave."

"And I have reasons for keeping you here. You're in better company with Koula, and even with horned vipers for that matter, than you would be out there. I made you sign a three-year contract when you arrived, and I'll make you keep it, even if you refuse to work. I'm a stubborn ass that way, young man."

"So I see."

Baudin found himself against a blank wall of cold resistance. His attempt to whip Lucien into a show-down with unpleasant language had failed, turned to his disadvantage. The military penal camp is a school for iron self-control under insults. Mongrain was using now the tactics of deferential indifference that had made him proof against hardened sergeants.

And Baudin, cursing himself inwardly for his appalling weakness for Lucien, surrendered.

"I know what ails you, son," he said with rough good nature. "You've been cooped up too long. This is too narrow a life after the already narrow life you have had since adolescence. You want a good time, a fling, eh? Suppose you shoot up to Paris for three months, at my expense, and work it out of your system? Get drunk, raise ——, and come back feeling less nervous."

"If you give me my passage home, you better make it definite," Mongrain declared. "I warn you that I'll jump my contract if I ever get to France. I have one bit of pride left, and that is to keep from accepting any more favors from you. Money or otherwise. I say that it would be best for all concerned to send me home without further bother. In the meantime, as far as work is concerned, I realize that I owe it to you. I'll do my best."

Baudin was too angry, too puzzled, to reply.

"Pudding?" asked the boy.

Baudin helped himself. Then to the servant—

"All right, Sambo, bring coffee and cigars."

The boy, Tono, was never so irritated as when Baudin called him Sambo, the nickname of the timber-cutter's first servant. It had always seemed to reflect a craving of the white man to have the intelligent services of Sambo, now promoted foreman of laborers, who boasted of his ability as house-servant "when massa first came." So that the coffee was watery, and the usual liqueur, not being specifically ordered, did not appear.

Dinner over, Mongrain glanced over the bookshelves, sighed and sank into an easy chair.

"Try 'Willy'—the yellow ones, at the right," Baudin suggested. "They'll amuse you more than the heavy ones."

Mongrain acted upon the suggestion, but his mind was elsewhere. He was restless, uneasy.

Baudin did some quick thinking. How had the solution of Mongrain's annoyance escaped him? The young man was stale. He needed excitement. He had no doubt formed a far different idea of life in the tropics, had promised himself some sport in the bush. He had gone fishing tonight. Perhaps, a hunt would interest him.

Baudin brought to the table a dozen empty shot-gun shells, and a reloading apparatus.

“Put out that cigaret,” he advised.

“Oh, the powder—”

“Yes”

Baudin filled a few cartridges with heavy shot, and the rest with large, round bullets. This done, he cleared the table, lighted a cigar. From the wall, he took down a double-barreled shot gun, produced grease and cloth, and cleaned the piece thoroughly.

“Are you going hunting, Monsieur Baudin?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

“When? I’ll soon tell you—”

He called Tono, who disappeared for a few minutes, returning with a medium-sized, muscular negro, clad in nothing save a dingy loin-cloth. This man was the leader of the hunters, who kept the cutting supplied with fresh meat—monkeys, wild pigs and small antelopes.

Baudin addressed him in native dialect. After the hunter left, he turned to Mongrain.

“Tonight.”

“After pigs?”

“No. Leopards, or rather a leopard. You know the old shack, near the river?”

Mongrain nodded.

“And a couple of rotten *chama-chama* logs? That’s where I’m going. Like all cats, leopards are creatures of habits. They will use a certain spot for a certain purpose night after night. The hunter tells me that a big fellow has been on those logs for the last three nights. We may be late, but the chief thinks not, if we leave right away.”

Mongrain’s eyes shone.

“You take that Winchester rifle,” Baudin advised.

The young man took the heavy calibered weapon from the rack.

“Throw back that lever—” advised Baudin once more. “It isn’t loaded. Here, take a few extra rounds. A leopard doesn’t fall before good intentions. We won’t talk outside. You get in the shack. I’ll hide somewhere near-by. You can get a sight of him in the moonlight. I had a diamond tip put on the foresight. You take first shot. Then each man for himself. Are you on?”

“I am!”

Guided by the hunter, the two made their way to the shack.

THE moon was rising over the tree tops, lighting the Agneby with a dull silver glow. The negro hunter carried an old trade musket, bound around with telegraph wire, which the postal administrator in Dabou would have given a great deal to locate. In that musket he had a cast-iron slug, several pebbles, a dozen rusty nails, and more powder than was absolutely safe. When the three reached the shack, he climbed a low branch, where he was completely hidden from view.

With a reassuring hand squeeze, Baudin left Lucien in the shack. After giving considerable thought to the probable direction from which the feline would emerge, he sought a favorable clump of undergrowth, where the branches were not too thick to prevent prompt action if required.

The leopard of West Africa is said to be smaller than the Algerian specie. But it is dangerous enough to hunt him. Baudin had shot in the upper country, when recruiting laborers. He had killed short-maned lions, hippos, and the most sagacious and dangerous of all African game, the buffalo, politely referred to as the “bush-cow.” So that his nerves were steady.

The moon rose higher. The trees rustled. He wondered if Mongrain was enjoying himself in the shack. He would have given much to have lived his first night hunt over again.

Everything was ready. Lacked only the leopard. Where was the leopard?

“Where’s the prison cat?” Baudin thought suddenly, irrevelantly, and smiled in gentle amusement.

By the progress of the moon across the sky, by the changing noises of the bush, Baudin was able to keep track of the passing hours. Midnight came, one o’clock—

He changed position cautiously, fearing that his arm might be numbed by a too prolonged posture. He chided himself for not having changed into woolen garments before coming out. He had no business out in the rapidly cooling air in a thin shirt and white cotton coat.

Came another thought. White garments were conspicuous at night. Mongrain might not drop the animal clean with his first shot. And a wounded leopard had an uncanny speed of sight and movement. Why had he gone to all this trouble to amuse Mongrain? He decided to wait another few minutes, then go back to the bungalow for a warm drink and sleep. Next time Mongrain longed to hunt, he could go forth with Koula, the Bambara.

Near the shack was a large tub, half filled with water, from which the laborers drank during the day. In the tub, a single star was mirrored. Baudin fixed his eyes upon this gleaming point. If he scanned the bush, his imagination might lead him astray.

A crashing through the undergrowth. Small antelopes, probably coming back from the water-hole in the river bed. But antelopes did not run swiftly without reason. Baudin became alert. He forgot Mongrain and became engrossed in the hunt. His eyes had wandered to one side. When he sought the tub, the reflection of the star, he could see nothing. The shadow of the shack seemed to have sprung forward and swallowed the tub.

"Strange—" Baudin mused.

Then he became aware of a strange sound, a faint splashing of water, a sound that reminded him of a leaky tap—of the dripping of rain—of a cat drinking milk—

He strained his eyes toward the spot. Gradually he distinguished the outline of an animal. Something was drinking from the tub. The lapping went on for some time, then the dark shape moved noiselessly, slid across the patch of shadow into the brilliant moonlight that made a rectangle of transparency between Baudin's post and the shack.

There was no mistaking the short ears jutting back from the skull, the powerful neck, the long, sinuous body, and stumpy limbs that made it appear as if the feline were crawling rather than walking. It passed four feet from Mongrain's loophole, and no shot came.

"Nervous," Baudin thought.

The animal looked up, hesitated, then, with a forepaw, toyed with a dead branch. A beast gifted with a sensitive nose would long ago have taken to flight, for the scent of man must be heavy about the place. Perhaps the giant cat was used to the smell of man—at any rate, it had not hesitated to drink from the tub. He at last gained the logs, leaped upon the largest.

Baudin's hand felt moist against the steel. Would Mongrain never fire!

A dry detonation, a streak of flame, like a long spark, flashed from the shack. Then, between Baudin and the light, a great shadow intervened. Instinctively, he lifted his gun, pressed the trigger of the left barrel. The leopard, knocked back by the impact, dropped. Baudin leaped forward and fired the buckshot into the beast's head.

"He be dead, massa!" shouted the hunter, sliding down from his perch on the tree.

Baudin, trembling, bent over the carcass. The skull was shattered. A long graze on the flank was doubtless Mongrain's shot.

"Mongrain—Lucien!" he called.

A second flash came from the shack, and a bullet thudded into the lifeless animal. Baudin felt the wind of the missile on his cheek. It had not missed him by an inch.

"Stop, Lucien!" he shouted. "He's done for—come out here!"

Lucien appeared, rifle in hand.

"You want to be careful with that gun, Lucien. You came —— near killing me—"

Mongrain mumbled a vague apology. But he showed no perceptible emotion. They were silent on the way back to the bungalow. The young man did not seem very enthusiastic about his first leopard hunt. Perhaps he was ashamed of his clumsiness. Baudin did not again suggest such expeditions. Lucien had revealed himself anything but a hunter.

The evenings that followed found the assistant surly at times, always reserved, but no trace of open rebellion.

* * *

"*AYOKA*, massa!"

"*Ayo*, old man!" Baudin answered the greeting of the aged negro, who had paddled his long canoe alongside the raft of logs. He turned to Mongrain.

"A good omen, Lucien. For ten years now, that old fellow has been the first to greet me, after the raft enters the lagoon. I have come to expect him, and would miss him if he didn't show up." He handed the native a coin, the *dash*—present—that white men are constantly paying out to natives on all and every occasion. The old man left, to sell fish to the Kroomen of the raft.

Mongrain shook off his apathy with apparent effort.

"Smelly old cuss—" he remarked.

"Fisherman," Baudin explained.

Mongrain, with unshaven chin and tanned face, appeared more of a man now. A few days before the rainy season had arrived. A crew of Kroomen had appeared at the cutting, and Baudin and Lucien had gone down river with them, directing the strenuous work. During the trip, Mongrain had seemed almost happy. Baudin thought he could be permitted a little grumbling.

At the mouth of the Agneby, where the river empties into the Ebrie Lagoon, the Kroomen had caught the large sticks, driven timber-dogs into the ends, and tied them into a solid raft. There was nothing more to do, but wait for a steam launch, due next morning, which would speed up the trip to Grand Bassam.

"I feel remorseful, at times," Baudin declared.

"Why?" Lucien asked casually.

"For cutting down the trees," Baudin paused and gazed over the lagoon, deep blue, placid. "It took hundreds of years for them to grow. Mahoganies are being cut down in the Sessandra, in the Bandama, near Bassam, Assinie, all along the Coast. As the cuttings spread it's as if some disease were licking the land bare; what will happen when all the forest is cut down? Nature is not stupid, Lucien. The trees grow here for a reason."

"More trees will grow."

"It's quicker to cut down a tree than to grow one. The government—" Baudin smiled—"the government levies a tax on us cutters, five francs for every tree. That's but one of the taxes, labeled 'for replanting.' You've been through the forest, I have taken you in all directions. Did you see a single nursery? Nurseries exist, the officials will assure you. They have official papers to prove it. Yes, they exist, on paper. In a way, it's a crime to lay this country waste. Look at this—" he indicated the lagoon—"with trees it is beautiful. I don't know—I can't quite tell why—but I feel guilty of killing something everytime I cut a tree down."

"That's a —— of a frame of mind for a timber man," Lucien offered.

"I know it. And I hide behind the old excuse—if I didn't do it, some one else would. All I think of is the profits. That's all anybody thinks of. The government takes a tax on the timber concessions before we start work, taxes everything—down to the custom duties we have to pay to export the stuff. We are killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Money—money—"

Lucien laughed.

"There are two points of view concerning money," he said. "That of the man who has it and holds on to it, and says it's rotten, and that of the other fellow, who lacks it, and doesn't talk, and tries to get it."

"You're right," Baudin nodded, "I've known the time when I—I would have done a great deal for money."

"I know that," Mongrain said, quickly.

"Do I look that greedy?" Baudin wondered, surprized and somewhat hurt to be taken at his word.

"I don't mean that," Mongrain went on. "Not now. But I have an impression, if you'll pardon my saying it, that you have done some pretty—well—shall I put it—unethical—things for money."

Baudin, surprized more and more by this unsuspected keenness of analysis, nodded.

"I have. I once did something for money that I can't understand now. Strangely enough, when I started here, where I made what one would consider a fortune, I had just decided that money was not good to have. Then it came to me."

"You were Laroche's partner, in the first place—when he started."

"Yes."

"He picked you up in a trading firm in Bassam, didn't he?"

"Yes—"

"And you bought a half interest?"

"Yes," repeated Baudin, wondering what Mongrain would arrive at.

"With money, of course—" Mongrain persisted.

"No. With sweat—with hard work."

Lucien Mongrain laughed loudly, nervously.

"What are you laughing at?" Baudin demanded, offended.

"Nothing."

Baudin shrugged.

"Nothing—but when anything strikes me as funny—I laugh."

"You seem to be out to annoy me," Baudin said. "Remember one thing—I am a patient man. I gather that you think that you haven't made enough in the last months to pay you for your efforts. When your contract with me ends, you'll go with some one else. But, if you haven't learned to halt your laugh in your throat by that time, you won't last long with any one. You know other timber-cutters, how seriously they take themselves. Who of them would stand for a tongue like yours in an employee?"

"I wonder myself why you don't fire me."

"I hate to admit I picked out a lemon. You are already working well. I may teach you to control your tongue. I have not lost hope that I may some day turn out a man from pretty poor material."

"Experimenting?"

"That's it exactly." Baudin smiled, bitterly. "A back-bush alchemist."

"Why pick me out? You have other men to try on."

"Because — because I understand you better than I understand them. You're more like myself at my age than the others are."

"In what way?"

"I—" Baudin halted angrily. "Are you a priest?" he asked. "You're wheedling a confession out of me."

"AS A priest does out of a man who is to be guillotined, eh?"

Baudin started. The ash from his cigar spilled over his hands. Mongrain resumed quietly—

"It must be a hard death, the guillotine—"

"It must be, yes—" Baudin admitted. "We all think we can meet death calmly. But that death—it must be horrible at the last minute— the idea of mutilation."

"Of the head falling into the sawdust basket with a bump—" Mongrain concluded for him.

Baudin wiped his perspiring face with his sleeve.

"You have a gruesome turn of mind tonight," he proclaimed.

"I have always thought about the guillotine. I sometimes dream of it at night—red, with its long shafts and glittering slicer. Don't you?"

"What?"

"Dream about it."

"Why should I?"

"To realize in the morning how lucky you are it's only a dream."

The Kroomen had lit a fire on tamped earth spread over one end of the raft. Tono, the serving boy from the bungalow, was busy preparing coffee for his masters. When he brought the steaming cups, the conversation halted.

Night closed down completely. There was no moon, and the stars were blanketed by the thick clouds. Toward nine, a steady drizzle began, which soon became a pouring rain. In rubber coats and helmets, the two white men left the Kroomen huddled at one end of the raft, and gained the other extremity.

"You don't know what it is to have brothers, sisters?" Mongrain began abruptly.

"No."

"Did you ever have a friend who took the place of them?"

"I did. Leon Laroche."

"You liked Laroche?"

"As I imagine a man loves a being who is at once a father, a brother, a friend. I loved him—that is, I'd have given my life for him. When he was in question I didn't count. And that's the test." Baudin shook his fist into the night. "They killed him—the fellows up there who started that war. To what purpose? It's forgotten now—and he's gone."

"He was only one."

"That's true," Baudin agreed.

"So you had a friend. The thing that killed him is too big, too indefinite to strike against. You are powerless. I think you shook your fist against France."

"I don't quite know what I was shaking my fist at, Lucien. I only know that it now seems useless for him to have died." Baudin breathed heavily. "I was threatening the universe, I guess—"

"If you could get the thing that killed Laroche into one man, a man with a neck, wouldn't you put your fingers around that neck and squeeze? Don't you believe that all men feel the same way about the ones they love? That even the blacks here do?"

"They do."

Through the rain came the mournful, droning song of a Krooman. The splashing of drops on the broad lagoon multiplied constantly.

The little stern-wheeler that plies between the Lahou Canal and Grand Bassam went by, alight, and from her came the strain of music. A phonograph was being played in the salon. The wave she threw up rippled toward the raft, which rolled sluggishly, the logs bumping against each other. Baudin spread his feet wide apart to keep his balance.

"By the way, Lucien, I expect you to pay off these Krooboys tomorrow. I have the money in small bills, five francs, in the satchel."

"Why didn't you wait and get it at the

Bao—*Banque de l'Afrique Occidentale*—when in Bassam? You might have lost it."

"Usually, I get it from the bank. But those fellows want to go home, and they're mostly Liberia boys. There's a British steamer leaving shortly after noon tomorrow. If we had to obtain the money from the bank, make up the different sums, the boys couldn't get her. No use hanging them up a week. There are times, Lucien, when I think my only fun in life comes from being good to those fellows. They'll go home, and say I'm a good boss. It will gratify my ego—and harm no one."

"And incidentally, they'll be willing to work for you harder next year."

"That may have something to do with it."

What a pessimistic young fool was Mongrain, thought the timber-cutter. He was becoming tired of him. Tomorrow, in Bassam, he would put up the proposition to him—to either show more respect, or be sent to France. There was no use expecting to change a swine into a race horse. Mongrain was fundamentally rotten.

This decision hurt him vaguely, but he was glad he had come to it.

"What's that in the water?" asked Mongrain.

Baudin bent low, staring at the lagoon surface.

He felt a blow on the top of his head, his ears rang, tiny stars crackled before his eyes. Then, the water struck his face, he felt himself sinking.

The rubber coat held the air sufficiently to bring him up again. His head bumped against a hard surface. He realized he was under the raft—

He held his breath, and frantically pushed against the rough surface, worked himself toward the open water. His mind did not connect as yet. He thought of but one thing—to get air. When his lungs seemed about to burst, his groping fingers touched a chain—the long chain that circled the raft, binding it into a solid whole. If he followed the steel links, he would be saved,

At last, his head was above water, his cheek rubbing against the rough side of a log. He felt rain drops, and the moist air flooded his lungs.

His first impulse was to cry out for help, for Lucien or the Kroomen. But he stifled the cry. Lucien was the only man who could have struck him. Yes, for he had even attracted his attention to the water for the purpose—to smash him on the head, very likely with the marking hammer he had held. Nothing but the rubber helmet had saved the timber-cutter a fractured skull. The blow had glanced, torn the helmet from his head and partially stunned him.

He threw one arm over the edge of the deep-sunk log to which he clung, then the other, and peered about. It was quite dark, for the rain had extinguished the natives' fire. Mongrain had planned his stroke well, had coaxed Baudin far from the crew. Why had he done it? Baudin recalled the so-called accidental shot during the leopard hunt.

There were always a few thousand francs in currency at the bungalow. And Mongrain had known the contents of the satchel!

Baudin stripped off the rubber coat, removed his shoes after considerable difficulty. He knew the spot where the raft was now tied. There was a fishermen's village not a quarter of a mile away. He was afraid to face Mongrain now, afraid that he would kill him.

The best thing to do was to gain the fishermen's village, obtain a canoe, and go back to the bungalow. There, he would be at home. He would forget Mongrain, and his hopes of retrieving a man from the dung heap.

AGAIN it was raining.

Save for the cook and his family, the cutting was deserted. The Koroko laborers, bearing the money earned during the season, had gone across to Agboville, to take a train north to the Sudan. The foremen were on leave on the coast, their departure coinciding each year with the floating of the logs down stream.

Baudin dosed himself with quinine and went to bed under several blankets.

For four days he read, and read. His thoughts always came back to Mongrain. What explanation had he given in Bassam? Had he been allowed to sail away to France without questioning? There had been a boat for Bordeaux, leaving two days ago. What would happen to him in France?

What could happen—save the old story of prison, more prison, then Cayenne or the guillotine. So that was what had worried him before he struck his employer. The guillotine—Lucien had committed the crime with his eyes open to consequences. Probably he had struggled against temptation. Baudin recalled his attempts to be sent home.

On the night of the fourth day, he sat in the darkened veranda, chiding himself with unabated bitterness for having been a fool.

He listened. Men were approaching on the Agboville trail. There was a brief conversation in bush French outside, then the sound of a white man's shoes across the compound, on the steps to the veranda. Baudin, bewildered, thought he recognized Lucien's quick footfalls. He sank back into the shadows, and the tall, slender form of Mongrain passed across the width of the veranda, and into the living room.

"Tono—" the young man called out, "I won't need you until morning."

There was the sound of a match scratched against a hard surface, then the faint sputter as the beak of the acetylene lamp flamed.

From his point of vantage, Baudin could see into the room. He saw Lucien remove his helmet and rubber coat, lean close to the lamp to touch the tip of his cigaret to the light. Mongrain was thin, drawn. He had not shaved. His coat hung upon his shoulders as if the flesh had wasted away from the bone structure.

Lucien, cigaret in lips, placed his hands in his pockets, stared at the book-shelves. He picked up the lamp, looked into Baudin's room. Satisfied that the place was deserted, he brought papers to the table, sat down in the easy chair and bent over the desk.

Baudin knew what he was doing—reading over timber contracts. There was no mistaking the large government stamp on each sheet. The papers piled neatly, Mongrain found a key, opened a small iron safe, and drew out several sheafs of bills, gold and silver coins, which he counted carefully. He worked so intently that he forgot his cigaret, and was compelled to relight it constantly.

"What nerve!" Baudin breathed, not without a trace of admiration. "He knew he might be suspected if he left immediately after my disappearance, and came back up here. Or maybe—it is the money—and he may also think that in the general reckoning after my demise he may obtain a commission for the contracts he has evidently put through this trip.'"

Mongrain uncovered the small typewriter on the table, inserted a sheet of paper into the roll, and typed, pausing to muse occasionally. He consulted a small note-book, drawn from an inside pocket, and figured rapidly with a pencil. Then he typed on, with a serious face, for many minutes.

At last he appeared satisfied, and pushed the machine from him, replaced the cash in the safe, twirled the knob with a casual movement of the fingers. A decanter and a small glass were on the table. The decanter was filled with *fine cognac.* Mongrain filled the glass, drank it down in a gulp. Then he decided that he was not thirsty for cognac, and drank from the spout of the water bottle.

Which recalled to Baudin his thirst after Coupois had been knifed.

The bottle of water emptied, Lucien eyed the decanter, then brushed it aside, rose to his feet, and paced the room. His shadow grew and dwindled on the walls. He would stop, gesture helplessly, ruffle his black hair, and go on. Baudin saw his face in the light: it was lined, ravaged as that of a very old man. His eyes, deep under his forehead, glowed madly.

"He finds it hard to forget," Baudin surmised.

Much later Lucien turned toward his room; then changed his mind. Coming back to the table, he placed the lamp near him, then lighted another, which he placed in a bracket on the wall. He wanted light. Then he sat, bowed his head upon his folded arms, and seemed to sleep.

Baudin entered the room from the veranda.

Lucien did not move.

Baudin stepped into a position facing him, leaned one elbow on a book-shelf, fastened his eyes on Mongrain's head, and waited. He knew that the young man would "feel" the stare, and even if asleep now, look up after a space.

Lucien soon stirred uneasily, half lifted his head, squirmed in his chair. Finally, he straightened his torso stiffly, spreading his arms wide. This done, he reached for a cigaret with the mechanical gesture of the constant smoker, He rose somewhat, to present the tip of the white cylinder to the flame of the lamp.

It was then that he saw Baudin.

He did not cry out, did not make another move.

His lips were still pursed to inhale. One hand was braced on the table top, the other was holding the cigaret. Baudin remained motionless.

Lucien blinked several times, and shook his head. Manifestly, he believed that he was the victim of the often narrated but seldom experienced hallucination of the killer. Baudin realized for the first time the young fellow's steel-ribbed courage, for Lucien deliberately lighted the cigaret, settled in the chair, and stayed still, staring at the apparition, and waiting for it to vanish.

And it was Baudin who held the winning hand, who had no fear of the supernatural to contend with, who gave in first.

"Hello, Lucien."

Lucien started, and crouched back into the chair.

"Where's your hammer?" Baudin went on.

LUCIEN'S even white teeth gleamed briefly, in a nervous grin. Baudin took a quick step, to place himself between the young man and the gun-rack on the wall. Seeing him move, hearing the slight sound of his feet on the mat, Lucien stood up, an expression of intense relief shining in his face.

"We have a few words to say," Baudin announced, "and we might as well say them now."

"I'm ready."

He drew from his pocket an automatic pistol, placed it in a drawer, which he locked, throwing the key through the window.

"You don't need to stay near the gun-rack," he explained, "as you can see."

Baudin removed his coat, rolled up his sleeves. His powerful forearms, corded with muscles, were revealed. Again Lucien smiled.

Baudin's fist slashed out, caught Mongrain full on the face. The young man staggered, then stood quietly, and looked at the older man. Baudin struck again, and again. Lucien went down, stood up again, never lifting his hands to ward the blows, taking the lacing as he had taken the blows of the sergeants at the penal camp. Baudin, once more, was pitting himself against experience.

As one swallow of whisky calls the next, one blow followed another. Baudin wanted to feel the smash of his bunched knuckles against the firm flesh, the sensation that he was inflicting pain, physical pain, on the man who had tortured him mentally for months.

"You'll have to fight," he panted. "You'll fight."

Lucien's face was bloody. There was blood on the floor, on the walls, tiny stars of blood on the papers heaped on the table. Baudin discovered in himself the soul of a savage. When Mongrain fell, seated against a partition, he lifted him up, grasped him by the front of his shirt, and, with open hand, rocked his head from side to side.

The slaps rang out sharply.

"Strike back, Lucien," Baudin pleaded, "——! Hit back."

Mongrain's passiveness lashed his own fury. He rained blows on his sides, his shoulders. He shook him. Lucien's head rolled loosely from one side to the other.

When Baudin stepped back, Lucien fell toward him, as if to take more blows, as if he too were greedy for the impact of Baudin's fists on his flesh.

Baudin, veins filled to bursting on his forehead, his neck swollen with passion, flecked with blood over chest and arms, stepped back farther. Lucien struck the floor first, arms apart, one leg flung out limply.

"I've killed him—" Baudin thought.

He looked about him, and was filled with shame. Strangely enough, his first thought was of the blood that was everywhere. From his room, he brought towels and water, washed the walls, the tables—washed himself. And Mongrain lay motionless.

Baudin then went to the center table, wiped the papers. His eyes fell on the report Mongrain had typed. It was a resignation from Laroche and Baudin Company. Following it was a statement, accounting for all the money, all the contracts within Lucien's scope. The Kroomen had been paid off in Grand Bassam, that was evident.

What had been Lucien's aim in trying to kill him?

He turned toward the prostrate form on the floor. He lifted the limp body in his arms, carried him to the bed. He pressed his ear over Lucien's heart. It was beating steadily. Mongrain had fainted, that was all.

From the living room, Baudin took a lamp; from his own bedroom an assortment of bottles. Up-bush minor injuries were frequent—a mangled finger, a cut. Baudin always had a small first-aid kit. A quick examination of the face showed nothing serious. The nose was bruised, but not broken. The lips were cut, there were gashes over the eyebrows, and another on his jaw, near the ear. The cheeks were raw.

Baudin cut the shirt from Lucien's torso, cut the underwear. Over the heart, an inscription was tattooed, a memento of the penal camp, "*Pègre, jusqu'à la mort.* A thief until death." Baudin had the same device upon his own breast. There were other tattooes, two not in the best of taste. On the shoulders, on the ribs, everywhere, bruises were darkening.

The timber-cutter gingerly felt the collarbones, the ribs, fearing a fracture. He looked at the long, springy muscles of the arms, ran his hand down the slope of the shoulders:

"Lucky he didn't strike back, after all," he muttered, "I'd have gone out like a candle."

He dipped the towel in liniment, washed the bloody face and chest. Then he paused:

"Just why didn't he hit back? My game leg—or what?"

Lucien's lips were puffing up now, his nose was swollen to twice its normal size. His hair, sticky with blood, was plastered down his temples. In the coarsened features, Baudin believed he saw a resemblance.

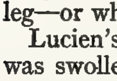
"It can't be—" he muttered.

He ran into the living room, returning with a cigaret, which he placed in a corner of the limp mouth. The eyes closed, the lids were rounded, and streaked with tiny red lines.

"It can't be—" Baudin repeated, "yet—it is."

Lucien groaned, and stirred. Baudin brought the cognac, poured a swallow down the young man's throat. Lucien opened his eyes.

"Feeling better, Dede?" Baudin asked him.



"YOU—sold—the Kitten—you admitted it—" Dede said, weakly.

"No."

"After Dupuy was shortened—the kids teased me—they, the reform people, shifted me to another school, I took my father's name, and my middle name. They let me, so I wouldn't be reminded all the time. Then—I met you—and—I didn't know you at first. I'd always remembered Poupon as bigger than you—that's because I was so small I guess."

"When did you find out?" Baudin asked.

"You remember—when you left Morocco, you went back to Paris. So did I. I went to see my old lady, told her I had a good job down here. She kicked, because it's a rotten climate. I told her it was better than Cayenne. So, she wanted to keep me back. She told me a lot of things about wealthy men who took young fellows to far off places. I knew she was blowing bubbles because she was sore.

"So I decided to let her see you, without you seeing her. It isn't that I'm ashamed of her, but I didn't know then you understood—people like us. I took her to the Hotel on the Place Vendome, and you came out with a bunch of ladies in furs, and gentlemen with trick waistcoats. She took one look. She's over sixty I guess, but she spotted you at once. She'd attended your trials, and looked at you long. She's tough. She even went to see Dupuy get his, and never batted an eyelash.

"'You know who that old guy is?' she asked me. 'That's Poupon, the —— who gave up the Kitten.' I said she was crazy, but she brought out pictures she'd cut out of the papers when you were tried—"

Dede hesitated, breathing deeply.

"Go on," Baudin put in.

"'All right,' I said, 'I won't go.' She looked at me hard. 'You're going. If you don't, I'll know you're no fine guy, like the Kitten was, and that you'll never do anything but pick pockets, like your papa.' I asked her what she wanted me to go for. 'To get him,' she said. 'You're the only man left of the old bunch.' So you see, Monsieur Baudin, it was up to me. I hated to do it, because you were giving me a lift. And when you were so —— nice down here, I tried to get sacked. But I had to—the world wouldn't be the world if one of us sold a pal and got away with it."

"And what do you intend to do now?" Baudin wondered. "Try again?"

Dede threw his arms wide, his swollen features grimacing.

"How do I know what to do, now?" his voice broke, sharply. "Why the —— didn't you beat me up until I passed out?"

THE antechamber into which Baudin and Lucien had been ushered was a small, plainly furnished room. On the walls hung framed photographs of actresses, of boxers, of famous jockeys and their mounts. This was neither a business office nor a private residence, although it evidently served as living quarters, and its location, on a busy street in the heart of Paris, spoke of some commercial purpose.

The attendant, who had opened the door, accepted their cards with a curt nod. His former occupation was easily surmised. He had been a policeman. The almost military cut of the black suit, the painful correctness of attire to the last detail, the shining toes of the heavy shoes were unmistakable.

He indicated that Baudin and his companion might sit down, pointed a long finger toward an ash-tray on a small table, fearing evidently that Lucien would shake his cigaret into the umbrella-stand. With a last suspicious glance, he left the room.

"Strange—how small everything seems—" Lucien offered.

"It's always the first impression after leaving the bush, and the sea," Baudin informed him.

The serious-faced attendant returned, escorted a slender, elegantly dressed young woman to the door. He bowed stiffly, and answered the murmured thanks with a thunderous:

"At your service, Madame!" Then to Baudin, "The boss will see you now, messieurs—"

They rose, and followed him through a narrow door, into a large room, occupied almost entirely by filing-cases, rising from floor to ceiling. At a table near the window sat a round-shouldered, very bald man.

"Good day, Monsieur Fayard," he greeted Baudin, without hesitation.

"I see I haven't changed as much as I believed," Baudin declared, "This is my employee, Lucien Mongrain."

"Be seated—be seated," invited the other, after a keen glance at Lucien, and a vague move of annoyance. He drew from his pocket a leather cigaret case, "You allow me?"

"Please go on," Baudin agreed.

Former Inspector of Police Arcin released a half dozen rings of bluish smoke.

"You desire?"

"They informed us at Police Headquarters that you had left the force," Baudin explained. "We obtained your address and came straight here."

"So I presumed." Arcin smiled, with indescribable satisfaction. "Quite correct. I am no longer an inspector. I have retired to private practise. I occupy myself with research work—divorce cases. Less—shall I say spectacular—honorable—but far more lucrative. You have prospered in the tropics, Monsieur Fayard."

"I've been lucky—" Baudin admitted. "But I perceive that I will not be compelled to explain who I am, and the occasion that caused our first meeting, fifteen years ago."

"That unfortunate affair—the murder of Coupois?"

"Yes. This gentleman, here with me, is the brother of Dupuy, the Kitten."

"Oh, the youth, Dede? I could not at first place him."

"He would like to know—"

"That Corvard's statements concerning your actions in the Coupois case had departed from absolute facts?" Arcin finished for him.

He rose, went to a filing case, reached up, and came back with a voluminous folder. From this he produced several envelopes.

"Monsieur Mongrain, I located Guignet by this finger-print—compare it with the card attached—" He handed Lucien the match-box which had led to Tallow-Mug's arrest, and that of Dupuy. "You are no doubt aware that we have a record of the addresses of all suspicious characters. There was also this—" he slid another envelope forward. It contained nothing but a few shreds of cloth. "This was found caught in the broken glass, on the wall. It was easily identified as having been torn from Guignet's clothing—from the coat he threw over the wall."

"Fayard had nothing to do with it? He did not talk?" Lucien demanded certainty.

"Not a word. In fact, he quite annoyed that good Monsieur Gendron—who fell at the head of his company at Souchez."

"Do you believe me now, Lucien?"

"Yes."

"Thank you," Baudin said, reaching for his wallet, and looking questioningly at Arcin, who shook his head.

"My policy has always been not to make cash from my police connections. It would be rather late for me to start now. These things—I keep here as souvenirs. I have often chided myself for my absurd affection for them, and all the rest in those cases—but I see it had a purpose."

"I have taken your time—I can not accept without—" Baudin protested.

"Give whatever it was worth to you to charity—if you have become a philanthropist," Arcin said, nettled. "It's been heartening to see you getting along well, Monsieur Baudin." He offered his skinny hand to each in turn: "Good luck—good luck."

On the stairs, Lucien laughed.

"Five minutes—and all over with. To think that it took us a month to come to Paris, just for that."

"It was well worth it, if you're at peace—" Baudin said.

Lucien nodded.

They stepped into the automobile left near the curb, Lucien taking the wheel. The tenseness that had kept them nervous for nearly eight weeks had relaxed, and now that all was settled, they both had the sensation that the interview with Arcin had been an anticlimax.

The car sped along the boulevards, turned northeast. In a few minutes, they were outside the city, on the National Road.

"Where are we going?" Baudin asked suddenly.

"I need fresh air—" Lucien said. "I feel sort of lost without that thing preying on my mind."

"The shadow has lifted," Baudin stated.

And once more, Lucien nodded.

"We better go back now," he said.

He slowed down, waited for an opportunity to turn, allowing several cars to pass in slow file. At last he made the turn, and was about to shift into his usual reckless speed.

"Just a minute," Baudin halted him. He pointed at the roadside. Between a line of trees, a tall wall of masonry was visible. "Did you pick out this place on purpose, Lucien?"

"No—I just felt like turning, that's all."

"Do you know what wall that is?"

Lucien scanned the spot, hesitated.

"Why—it's—" he breathed.

"Where I made my start in my short career as a burglar."

"Let's go—" Lucien exclaimed, with pretended fear. "The temptation might be too strong."

Both laughed, somewhat louder than was necessary.

Before the road turned, Baudin looked back, leaning against the seat.

He sighed.

"You should have seen me vault that wall!" he concluded.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

ALWAYS there is particular welcome at Camp-Fire for the old-timers of the West. John Kelly, who went West more than half a century ago, joins us and contributes his share of the things in which we are interested:

Tampa, Florida.

I have read but a few numbers of *Adventure* and like it, particularly "The Camp Fire." I too would join. Greetings! Comrades of the Camp-Fire. The writer, now in his seventy-fifth year, has seen something of the old West.

ON THE first day of November, 1872, we left Buffalo Station on the Kansas Pacific Railroad and headed north for our destination, Jim Lamb's dug-out on the Big Frenchman. Our party, Jim Lamb, an experienced Buffalo hunter and myself, a young and very green tender-foot. Lamb warned me that when we got to the Republican River we would be in the Indian country and he said "Never forget for a minute where you are. When alone, look behind you often, and never, never, no matter how friendly he pretends to be, let an Indian get near you. Motion for him to keep away and if he don't, go to shooting. Never shoot your last cartridge when hunting. Save four or five to come back to camp with and if you have to scrap the Noble Reds, don't let them get you alive, keep the last cartridge for yourself, savvy?" I savvied all right.

Lamb's dug-out was in the high north bank of the Frenchman about 200 yards east of the Falls; and on a cottonwood tree close to the Falls, wrapped in robes and blankets, was a dead Indian. For the two months that we trapped otter and beaver and hunted buffalo on the Frenchman, Stinking Water, this "good red brother" was our only neighbor. I did not object to his presence but the sight of him always reminded me that perhaps some of his kindred, who were not so good as he, might be snooping around.

A BIG snowstorm from the northwest took the buffalo out of that country and so we followed them. They moved twenty-five miles in one night, not ahead of the storm but against it. They crossed the South Platte River before it froze over.

We met the first Indians on the South Platte. They were Ogalallah Sioux, about 200, Whistler's band, at that time under the leadership of Two Lance. Whistler had been killed by a white man. This man, who called himself Buckskin Bill, had told at our camp-fire how he and his partner had killed Whistler, Fat Badger and another Indian. According to Bill's story, he allowed the Indians to come into his camp and cooked dinner for them but Bill was out of sugar and this made trouble. Whether the killing was justified, I don't know, but Bill took an awful chance when he let them come into his camp.

Two Lance's band were not exactly good but they were careful. They only killed two sheep-herders on the Platte River that Winter. You see they had the women and children with them. They wanted to stay on the river because of the willows on the islands, which they used for fuel, and because Sidney, where there were three companies of cavalry, was only twenty miles away, they had to be careful.

OUR skinner and myself, on the way to Julesburg with a wagonload of hides, were snow-bound at a sheep ranch on the river for five days. This place, a one-room dobe shack, was visited every day by a dozen or more Indians and they always waited for dinner and we fed them and had sugar for them in their coffee. One day, the skinner and I smoked the pipe of peace with ten or twelve of them. Perhaps Two Lance was one of them, but as I could not talk Sioux and they could not talk English, I never found out. The pipe had a stem four feet long. The bowl was red stone and probably came from Minnesota. They had no tobacco but smoked a mixture of red willow bark and some other stuff. Each Indian took three puffs and blew the smoke in different directions. These Indians had a white man with them who did their trading and acted as interpreter for them. I was in the room with him several times but never spoke to him or he to me. His name was Nelson. He is mentioned in a book called "Belden, The White Chief."

Here at the sheep ranch, I made acquaintance of a young Indian named Three Bears. Three Bears seemed an amiable, friendly young fellow of about 24. He wore a necklace made of all the claws of three grizzly bears; how or where he got them, I could not find out. He had two wives, an ugly one who did all the loafing, and a pretty (for an Indian) one who did all the work he did. He did manage to make me understand that the ugly one was a chief's daughter and he gave four ponies for her and only two ponies for the pretty one.

These Indians in 1872 were nearly all armed with Winchester carbines. I saw one muzzle-loader, a squirrel rifle made in Lancaster, Pa. By great good luck, we never had a scrap with them and I was back East next Spring.

When the Cheyennes came north, we had five hundred brass shells and we kept them loaded and kept our eyes open but we were indeed fortunate, much more so than some men I have known. White (Buffalo Chips), Government scout killed in an Indian fight. King, trapping on the North Platte, shot through the leg twice and had a very close shave. King killed several Indians but lost his team, wagon and two hundred dollars' worth of furs. Buckskin Bill killed Whistler, Fat Badger and another Indian. Hennesy, whom I met at Julesburg before he went south, the way I heard the story: Hennesy killed sixteen Indians and got out of ammunition. The Indians tied him to his wagon-wheel and burned him. This happened where the town of Hennesy, Oklahoma, now stands. In the fight at Dobe Walls, near Dodge City, Kansas, my friend Wils Parker killed an Indian at 1250 yards, so I have been told.

This is the old west I have been telling about, not the picture-show West, and may interest comrades of Camp-Fire.

In 1918 I saw from a railway train the Custer battle ground. From pictures and stories I had formed the opinion that this was a real battle. Now I think Custer and his men had no chance whatever—that they got no closer to the Indians than 300 or 350 yards and that the Crow Indian scout was not in battle at all or he would have died then.—JOHN KELLY.

SOMETHING from Harold Lamb in connection with his novelette in this issue. And, following his talk to Camp-Fire, part of a personal letter he wrote me that covers a bit of the same ground but is interesting nevertheless:

Berkeley, California.

Stenka Razin was the Robin Hood of the Cossacks. In the course of the last three centuries many legends have gathered around his name; popular superstition, mellowed with time, has credited him with supernatural powers.

If you were to travel by any chance on the great Volga through the southern steppe, the river-men would entertain you endlessly—if they happened to be Cossacks—with stories about Stenka Razin's exploits.

But his revolt, his expeditions, and the brief and colorful kingdom he established are recorded in history. For a while he was a thorn in the frontiers of two kindgoms—Muscovy and Persia.

As for *Mark*—he existed. I have his own account of the taking of Astrakhan, corroborated by the adventurer Jean Struys, the Hollander. From Astrakhan to the Volga mouths, and the execution at the Kremyl, the main incidents of the story actually happened.

THE battle between Stenka Razin's men and the Persian fleet probably took place before the capture of Astrakhan. It is given clearly enough by Petis de la Croix, in his annals of the seventeenth century—the trick played by Stenka Razin, the death of the ten thousand. The incidents of the story, of course, appear to take place within a few months, instead of two or three years, as was actually the case.

Some readers may be curious about the word "alkali" in Central Asia at this early date. I was curious when I found *al-kali* grass mentioned by a European voyager there, long before the desert regions of America were explored. On investigation *al-kali* proved to be correct, *al-qali* "roasted"—pure Arabic. In the deserts of Central Asia soap was made out of the ashes of the burned alkali grass.

This story is probably the first narrative to be written in English about the exploits of Stenka Razin. By great good luck in gathering material it was possible to *uncover* this story. Down to almost the smallest details it is a narrative of things that happened and men that existed.

The songs of the Volga pirates, the Round-head colonel, *Mark* himself, the capture of Astrakhan and the battle of the Volga pirates and the Moslems in the inland sea—all these are reality. The "man who was called a Walloon" played his part on the stage of life nearly three hundred years ago, just as he is shown in the story. The fat Polish colonel *did* accuse *Mark* as to his cannon, as told in the story.

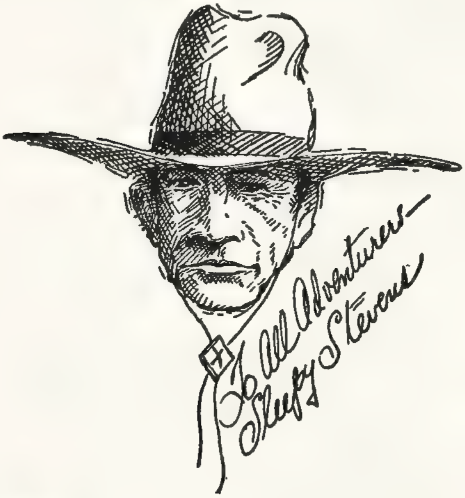
Stenka Razin's actions, his character, and his end are all drawn from life.

Mark is not his real name—he was known as a Captain Butler. And the character of *Uncle Kosta*, who tells the story, and the niece of the Round-head colonel are imaginary. Also, the actual date of the battle on the Caspian is uncertain—it may well have taken place before the events of the story.

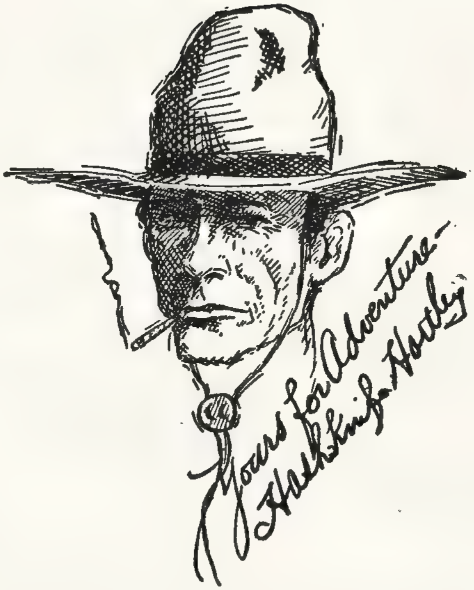
AS TO *Mark's* real identity—his youth and reasons for coming to Astrakhan—I have had to improvise. But I had his letters written from Astrakhan—splendid stuff, and the journal of the adventurer Jean Struys to compare them with, and the book of the priest-wanderer, Father Avril (who passed through Astrakhan a few years later) for further corroboration. Also the legends told me by the Cossacks as to Stenka Razin, and, to check these, the Moslem annals translated by Petis de la Croix some two hundred years ago.

So, from different men, in different languages and from various ages of the past come these details of what happened on the inland sea in the year 1670.

As I said before, this story has been *uncovered* from the past, rather than *made up*. And I have tried to tell it as *Uncle Kosta* would actually have told it. Hence the brief prelude.—HAROLD LAMB.



TWO of you wrote to W. C. Tuttle of our writers' brigade and he forwarded me the letter along with two of the things it asked for, namely and to wit, the author's own pictures of two of his characters whith whom



you're pretty well acquainted, *Hashknife Hartley* and *Sleepy Stevens*. It isn't often that a writer is also an artist and can show us exactly what his characters look like.

Answering the other request, a picture of Mr. Tuttle himself has recently been printed in the magazine.

Charlotte, North Carolina.

Being ardent admirers of *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* we would like very much to get a peep at the countenance of the author. If you have a couple of tintypes, photographs or life-size portraits that aren't doing you any good right now, slip 'em along.

We would like a tip on whether *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* will continue to do and dare on the pages of *Adventure*.

By the way, it is a known fact that as a cartoonist you are no little shake, so why don't you slip *Hashknife* and *Sleepy's* mugs on the pages of Camp-Fire and let us see them once as you see them?—L. O. LINEBERGER, L. C. HULL.

THIS, by the way, is what you might call our fifteenth birthday issue. Our first issue was that of November, 1910.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Vance H. Morris rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. Mr. Morris is like a good many others who, when they join our writers' brigade and speak up at Camp-Fire, think we don't want to hear about anything except what adventures they've had. We do want to hear about those, if there are any, but the main idea is to promote better acquaintanceship among us. A new writer gives us his first story; maybe there will be many more from him. Naturally we all like to think of him as a human being, not just a name. Where does he live and where has he lived, his business, age, likes and dislikes—as much of these things as he feels like telling us. We're not curious and prying—we merely like to get acquainted with the real man behind the stories.

Chicago.

An outline of my adventures? Well—to tell the truth, mine has not been an adventurous career. Two and one-half years on the other side, eighteen months of it on the *U. S. S. Drayton* and later the *Bridgeport*, were about the total of anything near adventure for me. After the war got mixed up in oranges in northern Florida and got frozen out in 1924. Back at the old job now, punching the keyboard on a linotype here in Chicago. But, with hopes of seeing more of the world before my number is "up."

This invitation to "Camp-Fire" means quite a bit to me and I sincerely appreciate being asked to rise and weep a weep.

I think I have about covered everything I started to say and managed to get an awful bunch of "I's" in it at that.—Vance H. Morris.

THE poem "Fort Garry Goes First," by Hubert Kelley, has brought us many letters of protest, with articles from Canadian newspapers also protesting, because the author in a note accompanying the poem had stated "Most of the troopers, I believe, were Americans." The protest was warranted and *Adventure* tenders its very sincere apologies. Winnipeg authorities are quoted as stating that the Fort Garry Horse, as comprised at Cambrai, showed less than a half-dozen troopers born in the United States and the belief is expressed that there was not a single American in B Squadron. In any case Mr. Kelley's belief—he made no positive statement—seems very far from the fact.

I wrote to him when the first protest reached me but have not yet received a reply. I am sure, however, that if he spoke hastily, he spoke in good faith. As for us in the office, we had no reason to question his statement in the same note that the Garry men spent the last night before their attack with his regiment, thus giving him fair opportunity to judge their personnel, and therefore we printed his estimate as he gave it. Certainly we had no faintest intention of deflecting any of the credit won by Canadians in the war. Practically all the protests took for granted that we had no desire to be unfair or inaccurate. The one exception came from an Englishman, not a Canadian, and he was merely a little haughty. All the others were friendly letters and were appreciated for their friendliness as well as for their service in calling our attention to an error.

Incidentally, one of the most interesting letters received was from James Johnston Starrett, ex-sergeant, who would like to get in touch with "some of the long-lost friends of his boyhood, especially one west of Shellmouth." Address 499 Belmont Ave., West Kildonan, Manitoba, Canada, in case any of them are present among us.

FROM William P. Barron something concerning the facts back of his novelette in this issue. And this citadel of Christophe—two of our writers have now told us about it. A wonder of the world, buried in Haiti, and most Americans don't even know of its existence.

New York City.

The time of my story is soon after the Marines landed in Haiti, in 1915, and took over the government in fact, if not in name. The details and the incidents as woven into the story are true to life. Practically every one of them occurred. As to the exact condition of Christophe's Citadel at the present time, I am unaware. I don't know if it is still rigorously guarded. It was at the time of this story.

I MENTION an iron-studded door to one of the citadel's great rooms. I am unable to be sure about that either. I have consulted with several Marines recently returned from Haiti about several minor details, such as these mentioned, but none of them was able to give me exact information.

So remember, folks, if any of you strike some detail in this story that doesn't jibe with your own knowledge of the same, please give me the benefit of the same charitable doubt that the old Arkansas Ozark mountaineer gave his friend who came home telling that he had seen ice in Little Rock in August—"Wal, hit might have been true in the time of it."

Certainly the details are in the main correct, for the time of this story. Recently, of course, the Marines have wrought many changes for the better. And I am proud of this arm of our country's service when I say it.

THERE is a West Indian proverb to the effect that "The Haitian is an animal most nearly resembling man." Certainly Haiti, or Liberia for that matter, is a concrete example of the inability of the negro to govern himself, according to the accepted standards of the civilized white world of today. As to whether the form of government to which the negro swiftly reverts if left alone is not, after all, the most adaptable form for his race, is quite another question.

The average American knows very little about Haiti. Very little has been written about the island, almost none by Americans. The most that has been written that is authentic and fair to the Haitians has come from the English press.

In writing about the Black Republic it is almost impossible to keep out the ludicrous and ridiculous. If some enterprising showman could bodily transport to an American Stage one of Port au Prince's cafés and induce the *gens de couleur*, who would be found therein, to act their natural selves for just one hour, Will Rogers and Al Jolson would have to retire.

By the same token, I have not overdrawn the General of Division. Before Marine occupation the Haitian army was in the proportion of about one general to every three privates. And the generals' uniforms were fearfully and wonderfully made, of every conceivable combination of colors, and gold braid galore. The Kaiser's state uniform was simply nowhere.

THE dances and voodoo rites described in this story are true in all details. These are carried on today in Haiti just as they were a thousand years ago in the river-lands of Africa by the ancestors of these people. Carried on secretly and by stealth in Port au Prince, Cape Haitian, and other Haitian towns; but openly in the hills and jungles. Of course no white man ever sees these orgies if the natives can prevent it, and they usually do.

I have tried to describe the effect of the tomtom when heard for the first time by an American negro. There is something about a tomtom's muffled and mysterious beat, when beaten by an expert, that is awesome, thrilling and indescribably creepy. By some secret of acoustics known only to the African negro, this witch's weapon is so constructed as to sound loudly several miles away, but when it is near at hand its note is low and indistinct. But, be it near or far, its barking, muffled cadence beats a devil's tattoo on your brain It awakens wild longings and savage evil thoughts of which a civilized man may well be ashamed. This devil's music unleashes impulses that are stored up in the mind far below the civilized strata, in that mysterious part of us known as the subconscious, where lie the sleeping memories of all that man has been from the beginning until now. That this is true of the tomtom any African traveler or missionary will vouch. So one need not wonder at its effect on *Big Un*.

AS TO Christophe's hidden treasure, it has been sought for long and earnestly from twenty minutes after the Haitians were sure Christophe was dead, up to the present time.

About twenty years ago a mulatto negro showed up in the gambling cafés of Port au Prince with some old gold coins, Spanish doubloons, Napoleons and English sovereigns. While in his cups he boasted that he had found the long-sought treasure of Christophe. The, at that time, briefly existent President of Haiti, sent for him. "Confide in me," the President tempted, "and become a general." But the mulatto was not of a confiding nature. They threw him into prison, and at that time a Haitian prison was no joke. They bribed and tempted, threatened and tortured to no avail. Finally, in some mysterious way, an old voodoo witch accomplished his escape. He has never been seen since.

Lately, according to the Marines, the hunt for Christophe's treasure has assumed a new phase. British Tommies from Jamaica, down on their luck, or stranded Americans, get up treasure hunts in the territory frequented by the defunct Christophe, with the aid of the old-fashioned divining-rod, they locate buried gold, always on the property of a fairly prosperous native. For a consideration they reluctantly divulge the secret to him. But to make assurance doubly sure a Papaloi is consulted. The Papaloi, also for a consideration, agrees with the divining-rod.

"But behold!" he exclaims. "This pot of gold has a spell upon it. If any but native Haitian hands touch it before it is drawn out of the ground, a spirit will snatch it away and hide it in another place."

A pot is buried by the conspirators, a dark night is selected, and the digging begins. Just as the spade reveals the pot, one of the arch plotters reaches out an eager unrestrainable hand to lift out the pot. Then a gibbering is heard in the nearby brush, a spectral figure glides out and seizes the pot and vanishes, as the terrified natives scatter. All the gold is lost except that in the pockets of the arch conspirators which they have filched from the natives who were to share in the pot of gold. This same game with a few variations has been played on the credulous negroes many times.

REMAINS now the citadel of Christophe. If any of you ever visit Haiti, by all means see it. To me it is one of the wonders of the world. How did that half-savage mulatto king manage to build that massive fort on the tip-top of a mountain? Nothing is known of it in America. If it were in Egypt or on the Rhine, every traveled American would be familiar with it. Personally I don't believe that any of the old European castles and forts compare with it in mighty strength. Certainly it outclasses them in the difficulty of construction and the merciless savagery with which it was built.—WILLIAM P. BARRON.

SOMETHING added to our discussion as to the relative value of various civilizations, including our own much boasted brand:

Lincoln, Nebr.

I have read the various comments or letters, rather, that have appeared in "Camp-Fire" in the last few issues, about the various civilizations and the comparisons being made between them. I thought that I might as well put my oar in to help the boat along in the direction it was drifting. I can only give just a little information but it may help some. I hope so.

Everybody has been so busy comparing the differences between the Old World civilizations that they apparently have overlooked the civilization that was the New World's. And I don't mean maybe. I have only had a slight glimpse of the material that is going to waste upon the empty air or that is being overlooked.

I am enclosing a clipping from the Chicago *Herald and Examiner* of August 19, 1925.

TO COME back to the subject. When the Spaniards came to Peru in 1533, with Pizzaro at their head, what did they do? Within a few years they practically destroyed a civilization without knowing it, probably. I say probably because they wouldn't have cared if they had known. All they wanted was gold and, possibly, any and all glory that was to be gained from the conquest. Now just what did the Spaniards gain by this conquest? They don't have the gold that they took from the Incas. They don't have even any of the land of the New World, or South America, rather. All they have got is the glory of discovering a new country for Spain, which isn't much in my estimation. Also, how many Spaniards lost their lives in the Peruvian conquest? More than it was worth. Did the Spaniards ever give anything to the Incas that was worthy of mention? Name it. I don't know of any. Did the Spaniards bring education to the Incas? No. The Incas had education before the Spanish ever thought of coming to America. Did they bring spiritual enlightenment to the Indians? No. I don't see how they could. They weren't over the average man in intelligence. Else, why weren't they interested in the Indians themselves, rather than their gold?

HAS it been forgotten that the condition of the Incas was very much better before the coming of the Spaniards? Through the history of North and South America there runs a line or thread of tragedy of the white man's connection with the Indians. If the white men had treated the Indians half-way white, it would not have been so bad. But the pioneers that came to America after the Spaniards had to bear the brunt of the Spaniards' cruelty and treachery.

I am not attacking the white man's treatment of the Indian, as a whole, and there is much to complain about, but it is the cause of the Spaniards' treatment of all Indians which brought about later disastrous results upon the white men.

There is an article upon the Mayan ruins in Yucatan, Mexico, which I have about the house somewhere and I will send it to you as soon as I can find it.—Joseph Everett Ward.

P. S. I forgot that there might have been priests along on that expedition. But at that, didn't they try to coerce them (the Indians) with the sword and flame to take the Spaniards' religion?—Joseph E. Ward.

The newspaper article follows:

NEW ORLEANS, Aug. 18.—The Maya Indian civilization of Yucatan classified by Dr. William E. Gates, who is directing Maya research work for Tulane University, as equal at its apex to that of any people recorded in ancient history, and comparable between 200 and 600 A. D. to the older civilization of the ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians.

Doctor Gates, who is head of the middle American research department of the Tulane, said one of the university's expeditions last March reported the discovery of many hitherto unrecorded monuments. These dot the entire Maya territory, which embraces the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, and extends into Guatemala and Honduras.

The monuments appear to have been built at five-year intervals for recording the history and science of the race, and bear a date at the top. Doctor Gates said they indicate an intense interest in astronomy. The deductions of the Maya Indians regarding the movements of the sun and moon have been declared by scientists to have been remarkable, although their numerals and calendars are as yet little understood.

Doctor Gates, who is a graduate of the University of Virginia, has been studying the Maya pitographs for more than twenty years and his fellow scientists say he is near a solution of them.

Tulane will send a larger expedition into the Maya field next year for excavations and careful study of the palaces, temples and dwelling-places which, despite their abandonment for approximately 1,500 years, are rich in drawings, paintings, mouldings and carvings on wood and stone. Practically all the work done there so far has been on the surface, and Doctor Gates hopes to be able to revisualize the customs and manners of the people.

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THE following letter, sent to editors throughout the country, from Walter F. Lineberger, member of Congress from California, speaks for itself and should ring loud and insistent in our ears:

Los Angeles, Cal.

At the request of Captain Hobson, President of the International Narcotic Education Association I am sending under separate cover copy of a document entitled "The Peril of Narcotic Drugs," and am enclosing copy of a letter sent to all Superintendents of Education and Superintendents of Schools, which will give you some idea of the plan on foot to instruct the youth through their teachers and parents.

This is in the nature of an emergency, nation-wide program and will be pushed forward to completion through the end of this year and the next scholastic year.

CAPTAIN HOBSON informs me that the Board of Directors of the International Narcotic Education Association, at their Spring meeting in Los Angeles, May 12, 1925, besides approving the carrying to completion of the nation-wide teachers' and parents' program, adopted a resolution for a world conference on Narcotic Education to be held in the Summer of 1926 in connection with the Sesqui-Centennial celebration in Philadelphia, to be preceded by a program of intensive study and research, attended by widespread educational publicity, and followed by the practical application of standard policies and programs in all lands. I am enclosing copy of the resolution.

Captain Hobson, as President of the International Narcotic Education Association, has officially requested me to introduce a bill in Congress for an appropriation for a fitting participation in the Conference by the Government of the United States as host to the governments of other lands. This I have agreed to, as it will be in pursuance of the resolution adopted at the Geneva Conference committing the nations to a policy of Narcotic Education.

IT IS hardly necessary to point out to you that this problem is challenging all nations and has become serious and urgent. Take the situation in America for instance. In 1919 the special survey of the Treasury Department reported the number of addicts in the United States as exceeding 1,000,000, and increasing. In the February, 1925, issue of *Current History*, Fred A. Wallis, Commissioner of Corrections, New York City, says, "Of all the plagues visited upon our land, drug addiction is by far the most horrible and the most deadly. . . . The increase in narcotics has been accompanied by an increase in crime. . . . Heroin changes a misdemeanant into a desperado of the most vicious type. . . . 60% of the inmates in all penal and correctional institutions of New York City are users or sellers of drugs. . . . There must be in the greater city of New York close to 200,000 drug addicts of the underworld type. . . . There are many more of whom nothing is officially known." The health officer of Chicago, investigating cause of crime there, found drug addiction alarming among the youth of both sexes. Last year the Assistant U. S. Attorney General reported that more than 40% of all prisoners being convicted in Federal Courts were addicts and that the number is increasing. Judge McAdoo of the New York City Courts estimates that of the thousands of addicts who have appeared before him, 98% were below the age of 30 and 98% were heroin addicts. The heroin addict is inherently a recruiting agent and soon recruits a gang. The members of this gang in turn soon start recruiting other gangs. —WALTER F. LINEBERGER.

AND the evil is increasing, increasing, increasing.

Prohibitionists, if you have any sense of proportion and any sincere interest in the morals and welfare of our people, turn your efforts against this evil so much more deadly and degrading than drink. Or are you merely single-track reformers, one-idea fanatics? Or are you incapable of accomplishing anything against an evil that has proved itself unwilling to lie down and die at the behest of words written on the pages of a statute book? At least *try* to help against it, for part of its increase is of your making.

Boards of education, stop for a while your consideration of this text *vs.* that, of rules and methods, of this and that technicality of education, roll up your sleeves and go into this fight to save your pupils from this evil that makes all education null and void.

Parents, will you sit idle and indifferent with no assurance that this insidious secret devil is not reaching out its talons for your children? If you doubt it, go to your police magistrates and your doctors and inquire.

The evil is so widespread, so terrible, that there should be no need of words to rouse every one of us to forceful action against it.

As to the suggested method of fighting it. I, at least, can conceive of no better one. The joke method of passing prohibitory laws has in this case already proved so futile that it is internationally admitted to be futile. There are already plenty of prohibitory laws buried impressively in books and impossible of adequate enforcement. The suggested method is one of education and individual action—the only practical method for this case and, incidentally, for *any* case of needed public reform. Further, it is an education of prevention rather than of attempted cure. Further, "education" is not merely left an abstract term but is made definite, concrete and practicable by the proposed plan. And the plan has been worked out by the world's best and most interested experts on the narcotic drug evil. Read the following letter, sent out to 5,000 school superintendents. It ought to be in the hands of every educator in the country. Help put it there.

March 21, 1925.

Dear Superintendent:

At the request of Captain Hobson, I am sending you and other superintendents, fifty copies of a document entitled, "The Peril of Narcotic Drugs." The basic materials contained in the first part of the document, I am informed, have been reviewed and corrected by a committee of eminent scientific men and the lessons contained in the second part have been prepared by Teachers' College, Columbia University.

The original plan was to have Congress enact a bill to print and distribute these documents to teachers and parents at Government expense but the measure has just failed of enactment because of the congestion of bills in the short session. Considering the document of such vital importance to the public, I have secured unanimous consent of the House to print same in the Congressional Record, making it frankable.

Sending out this document is particularly pertinent at this time because of the Geneva Conference on opium and narcotic drugs just ended, where the United States was represented, which brought to the attention of the civilized world the universal menace of narcotic drugs. The one thing upon which all nations there represented were unanimously agreed, was the importance of inaugurating everywhere a policy of education on the peril of narcotics.

Would you lay the matter before your Board and see if a way can be found locally to get the document into the hands of parents, as well as teachers? I feel that you will find sympathetic cooperation from the press and pulpits, the parent-teachers, and other organizations. You are at liberty to print and use the document, or any part of it, without copyright limitations, or without reference to its sources. Please command me if you wish additional documents in franked envelopes ready for directing and mailing without postage like those I am sending. If so, I will refer your order to the Public Printer and will authorize him to supply them to you at cost, $4.11 per thousand. Make check payable to Public Printer; and until the next session of Congress, address me at 4315½ West Second Street, Los Angeles, California.

I have been informed by Captain Hobson, who is directing this work for the International Narcotic Education Association, and who is the author of one of the articles contained in the document, that it would be helpful if superintendents, teachers and others should make notes and send suggestions and criticisms, particularly those that come from actual experience in teaching so that standard texts and methods may ultimately be perfected for incorporation permanently in our education curricula.

Believing the dissemination of this information will accrue beneficially with tangible results in the uplift of humanity, I feel that I am fulfilling a public duty in bringing this document to your attention and am hoping for your earnest cooperation in this matter of such high public policy.—Walter F. Lineberger.

Now get busy on your local school authorities. If they will not act, they are not fit to administer the schooling of your children. Throw them out and put in men and women who *will* act.

* * *

A NATURAL-BORN helmsman—and a case where fact had to be toned down to make believable fiction. A word from Ralph Perry concerning his story in this issue:

New York City.

Joe comes direct from real life. He hailed from the North Carolina hills. He couldn't read or write, but from the start he had the knack or the sixth sense to steer a ship, a faculty that comes ordinarily only after years of experience. After a week's practise he was a better helmsman than our chief quartermaster, who had steered for twenty years.

Originally I had this in the story, but when I read it over before mailing it I decided that it is such an unusual thing no sailor would ever believe it. I had to rewrite the first page, therefore, and found the ending could be fixed over, too. *Joe* was stupid, but he was too stupid in my story for the story's own good.

The crossing situation happened about as described between the *Antigone* and the *Mount Vernon* in September, 1919. I had the deck of the former ship, and came darn near porting helm. It was the worst thirty seconds I ever want to put in, for we carried over three thousand troops, and I could see them all swimming around. . . .—Ralph Perry.

REFERRING back to our discussion as to whether John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Lincoln, was not killed as generally believed but lived long afterward under another name, Barry Scobee, of our writers' brigade, was kind enough to send me the March 21 to May 2, 1925, issues of the *Dearborn Independent* containing a series of six articles by F. L. Black covering this whole question very thoroughly. The St. Helen, George and Armstrong pretenders to Booth's identity are all carefully examined. And the net findings are that Booth was killed as reported at the time and that the pretenders had nothing whatever to stand upon.

To me those findings seem entirely convincing. A similar article in another magazine, arriving at the same conclusion, was utterly unconvincing. In the light of Mr. Black's carefully found verdict it seems useless to continue our own discussion, but of course if any of you after reading his articles do not agree with his conclusion and can throw fresh light on the matter, we'll be glad to open up again. In any case Camp-Fire says its thank you for the letters and the many newspaper clippings that were sent in by readers. All of them have been saved and can be drawn upon if need arises.

Even yet George and St. Helen are—or is—not accounted for. If not Booth, who? Such a type in such circumstances is an enticing mystery in itself.

* * *

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any qualified person can start a Station.

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A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

Arizona—200—Clifton. C. Hooker.
209—Quartzite. Buck Conner, Box 4.
285—Yuma. W. P. Kline, 4th Ave. & 8th St.
Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.
California—28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, Cottage Inn.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
113—Vallejo. Edith G. Engesser, Golden Triangle Rabbitry, Highway Homes.
114—Mill Valley. L. F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.
115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.
116—Sebastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.
126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham, Box 388.
141—Santa Cruz. A. W. Wyatt, Capitola Road and Jose Ave.
149—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press, 1264 Valencia St.
186—Santa Ysabel. William Strover, Santa Ysabel Inn.
210—Berkeley. Dr. Louis C. Mullikin, 305 Acheson Bldg.
211—Pomona. Fred G. Sunley, 480 E. Alverado St.
212—Del Monte. Alex H. Sokoloff, 3rd Signal Co. R. O. T. C.
231—San Francisco. Earl V. Swift, 24-A Brady St.
251—Williams. Joe Lanouette, Opera Pool Hall.
252—Fresno. Mrs. Harriet Church, Echo Gardens, 712 Echo Ave.
257—San Francisco. K. F. Richards, 1807 Post St.
266—Santa Barbara. E. Chester Roberts, 714 State St.
273—Los Angeles. Henry M. Harrod, 6615 So. Main St.
286—Sacramento. Carl W. La Force, 2329 Eye St.
287—Stockton. Ivan J. Dill, 520 E. Washington St.
298—La Mesa. Alan Wanbough, 343 Spring Street.
Colorado—105—Grand Junction, Bart Lynch, 236 Main St.
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(Editor to be appointed.) Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

48. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
Reece H. Hague, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

49. ✠ Canada Part 7 Southeastern Quebec
Jas. F. B. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting,

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

50. Canada Part 8 Newfoundland

C. T. James, Bonaventure Avenue, St. Johns, Newfoundland. Hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography; general information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents.*)

51. Canada Part 9 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island.

Fred L. Bowden, 312 High Street, Newark, N. J. Lumbering, hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography, farming and homesteading; general information.

52. Alaska

Theodore S. Solomons, 6720 Leland Way, Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

53. Baffinland and Greenland

Victor Shaw, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

54. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

55. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico

H. F. Robinson, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance; oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

56. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.

(Editor to be appointed.) Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

57. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.

Fred W. Egelston, 606 West Lamme, Bozeman, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

58. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country

R. T. Newman, 1001 Park St., Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

59. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.

J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

60. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.

Joseph Mills Hanson, care *Adventure.* Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

61. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

62. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

63. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River

Geo. A. Zerr, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section* 64.)

64. Middle Western U. S. Part 5 Great Lakes

H. C. Gardner, 1909 Stout St., Denver, Colo. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

65. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Adirondacks, New York; Lower Miss. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms, North and East Shores of Lake Mich.

Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif. Transcontinental and other auto-trail tours (Lincoln, National, Old Santa Fé, Yellowstone, Red Ball, Old Spanish Trail, Dixie Highway, Ocean to Ocean, Pike's Peak); regional conditions, outfits, suggestions; skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake tripping and cruising; trapping; fresh water and button shelling; wildcraft, camping, nature study.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers

Howard A. Shannon, care of *Adventure.* Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville

Howard A. Shannon, care of *Adventure.* Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

68. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians

William R. Barbour, care of *Adventure.* Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

69. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala. Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.

Hapsburg Liebe, care of *Adventure.* Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine

Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. For all territory *west* of the Penobscot River. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

71. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Eastern Maine

H. B. Stanwood, East Sullivan, Me. For all territory *east* of the Penobscot River. Hunting, fishing, canoeing, mountaineering, guides; general information.

72. Eastern U. S. Part 8 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I. and Mass.

Howard R. Voight, 35 Dawson Ave., West Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions; history.

73. Eastern U. S. Part 9 New Jersey

(Editor to be appointed). Topography, hunting, fishing; automobile routes; history; general information.

74. Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland

Lawrence Edmund Allen, 201 Bowery Ave., Frostburg, Md. Mining, touring, summer resorts, historical places, general information.

A.—Radio

Donald McNicol, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

Victor Shaw, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. Gordon, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—**All Shotguns,** including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.*

2.—**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers,** including foreign and American makes. Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—**Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800.** Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. (Editor to be appointed.)

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure.* Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

Ernest W. Shaw, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

William R. Barbour, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

Lieut.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., 2940 Newark St. N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

Fred. F. Fleischer, care *Adventure*. *United States:* Military history, Military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—Navy Matters

Lieut. Francis V. Greene, U. S. N. R., 245 Bergen Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. International and constitutional law concerning naval and maritime affairs.

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

Arthur Woodward, 1244¼ Leighton Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazard, the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

Claude P. Fordyce, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. Newman, 1001 Park St., Anaconda, Mont. General-office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

Dr. G. K. Noble, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St., and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

Dr. Frank E. Lutz, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write Laurence Jordan, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico**, and customs receiverships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State**, Francis H. Bent, Jr., Farmingdale, N. J.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. Morrall, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National Parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

Hopi Snake Dance

A MORE details about this annual Indian ceremony in the October 10th issue, another expert, Mr. Harriman gave directions for reaching it by car.

Request:—"Will you please explain the snake dance of the Indians? Are there many Indians in that State now?

Of course you have read of the Seminole Indians of Florida? They are getting quite civilized now.

What kind of fishing is done in New Mexico?

My father is a Florida hook and line fisherman. The chief fish caught for market here are mullet, king fish, mackerel, trout, and others of less importance. Tarpon and king fish being the game fish.

I could explain the whole fishing industry of the west coast of this State to you but you probably know or can find out from better explainers than I.

Any information on agriculture, hunting, etc., that you have time to give, will certainly be appreciated."—A. M. Woodhull, Gulfport, Fla.

Reply, by Mr. H. F. Robinson:—"I have reduced to writing an outline of a lecture I gave on the dance before the University of New Mexico, and in the three pages you will find a fairly complete description of this ceremony and what it means.

There is also enclosed a general description of New Mexico, and another sheet with information regarding hunting and fishing in the State.

Practically all of the fishing is limited to trout in the mountains and bass in the Elephant Butte reservoir, an artificial lake about 40 miles long.

After you have read these, if there is any specific information you desire that is not covered, write me and I will be pleased to give you all of the additional information possible.

THE SNAKE DANCE OF THE HOPI INDIANS.

OUTLINES OF A LECTURE GIVEN BY GEN. H. F. ROBINSON AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO.

"THE Snake Dance of the Hopi Indians, during which the performers handle and dance with live rattlesnakes dangling from the mouth is not an exhibition of mountebanks as some travellers seem to think, but a pious ritualistic rite—a dramatized prayer—of perhaps the most religious people in America."

Out in the midst of the Painted Desert of Arizona, their villages perched high on rocky craigs, live the Hopi Indians who have this peculiar ceremony. With the exception of a very few of their number they are untouched by the religion of the white man, clinging to the belief of their forefathers. Much of their time, especially in the winter, is devoted to religious exercises and ceremonies for rain and the growth of crops.

Prayer, to the white man, is a simple matter; it is to speak or make known one's desires to God, for he believes that his God can speak and can hear his appeal. With the more primitive people the verbal prayer becomes more than a simple request—certain forms become the rule and words used come to have a symbolic meaning and the communication with the gods was by these symbols.

With the adoption of gods from some other tribe it was recognized that perhaps the gods had a language of their own and did not understand that of the petitioner, hence there arose a gesture language wherein the worshiper showed by gesture and action what was desired, from which grew the dramatic prayer, and perhaps following that was the use of pure symbolism, where upon an altar was displayed the thing desired or its symbol.

LIVING in an almost rainless country where his existence depends upon his crops, rain is life itself, hence his one dominant thought in life is to pray for rain. So we find these socalled dances, which are ceremonies adopted by man to influence the gods to grant his wishes—a dramatic form of prayer—at frequent intervals.

The Snake Dance is held usually during the last part of August and is a nine days ceremony although from the time of the beginning of the preparation, sixteen days elapse.

The Hopis have legends that will explain the ceremony which is known to the priesthood alone, and in a general way to all the people. Just what it means is a sealed book to the white man, but enough is known to be summarized something as follows:

THE Indian has a peculiar line of thinking, and his logic differs from ours in that he argues from the effect to the cause, and something like this. He knows he receives help and the good things of life from Those Below or the People of the Underworld. The snake lives in a hole in the ground, therefore he is in communication with Those Below. Further—when the snake crawls on the ground he leaves a sinuous or zig-zag track; the lightning leaves the same track in the heavens—therefore the snake and the lightning are two manifestations of the same thing. Again—the lightning brings the thunder, the thunder brings the rain and the coming of the rain brings the crops without which they would die. The People of the Underworld influence the seasons, the bringing of the rain. The logic is therefore perfect that the prayers of those on this plane of living can be communicated to Those Below through the medium of the snake, the prototype of the lightning which brings the rain.

The ceremonies are jointly conducted by the priests of the Snake Clan and the Antelope Clan. After the announcement of the dance the Snake Priests go forth to the four points of the compass and hunt for and bring into the kiva the snakes.

ON THE day before the dance proper is the ceremony of the "washing of the Snakes" as it is called, which is really a ceremonial baptism of the snakes and the ceremonial giving to them of the message they are to take to Those Below. This part of the ceremony has been witnessed by very few whites, hence has not been extensively described. But the snakes are taken by officiating priests, and while ritualistic songs are being sung the snakes are immersed in a bowl of consecrated water and placed upon a sand painting altar.

That evening is what is known as the Antelope Dance in which a ceremony very similar to that of the preceding day excepting that the snakes are not used.

The next morning runners, who have been at a far away spring, run to the mesa and up the steep trails to the top bearing stalks of the ripening corn, where they are met by the women and maidens of the village and a mock struggle takes place in which the women are victorious, taking the corn from the runners.

That evening, when the shadows grow long, takes place the dance which means so much to the Indian and to see which many have traveled miles and spent days on the road—and it only lasts a scant three-fourths of an hour.

Every vantage point is crowded by visitors, white and red, when the Antelope priests are seen coming, and after marching around the plaza they halt and line up before the bower of cottonwood branches, called the kisa, where the snakes have already been placed. There they begin a chant, and while this is going on the Snake Priests appear. Around the plaza they swing at a quickstep, and as they pass in front of the kisa they loudly stamp their feet upon a piece of plank covering a hole in the ground. This hole represents the opening to the underworld and the stamping is to attract the attention of Those Below, so that they may listen to the ceremonial petitions. Four times they make the round and then line up facing the line of the Antelope men. Now both lines of priests join in a chant, and at the end the snake men break into groups of three, the head man of each group approaches the kisa, reaches in and appears with a snake in his hand. As he raises up he grasps the snake a short distance back of the head with his teeth, taking care not to injure it, putting the head of the snake to the right.

NOW they divide into groups of three, the Snake man, the "hugger," so named from his position in the dance with the snake man, his left arm around the shoulders of his companion, and whose duties are to keep the attention of the snake by means of the snake wand. Following these two are the gatherer, who is one of the younger priests usually, and whose duties are indicated by his name. After one round of the plaza the dancer drops the snake, the gatherer sweeps it up with his right hand and carries it in his left; the snake man secures another reptile and the rounds are repeated until all the snakes have been used.

Then the chief priest takes a tray of sacred meal and outlines on the ground the "circle of the six directions" and in this all of the snakes are deposited, then, at a signal the priests run in, each grabs as many of the snakes as possible and then dashes down the trails to the village below, when the snakes are liberated to the four cardinal points to carry the message entrusted to them to Those Below.

Following this is the purification, where the priests wash off the ceremonial paint, and drink copiously of a medicinal brew, go to the edge of the mesa and vomit, repeating this until they are thoroughly cleaned inside and out.

Are the snake fangs removed to render them harmless? No, for the priests are often bitten. Does the bite harm them? It does not seem to, for never has one been ill from it so far as known.

WHETHER there is efficacy in the ceremony to bring the rain the speaker would not vouch, but he stated that out of fifteen times he had seen the ceremony it had rained within a day or two, and often during the dance, although this may be because the ceremony is held during the summer rainy season. At any rate the Indian believes that it is effective, and that dire results would follow was the ceremony to be omitted.

There is no question of the impressiveness of the ceremony. The earnestness of the actors, the spectacular use of venemous serpents and the wonderful desert setting on the top of a rocky craig, hundreds of feet above the valley, all make it something the observer will never forget.

The full statement of the departments, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

A Road House in Brazil

A NEW idea.

Request:—"I am contemplating a trip from here to Brazil in the near future and am desirous of getting all the first hand information I possibly can before I start, and am writing you for any information you can give me on Brazil.

My partner who is Master Mechanic here for our company, will accompany me. We have about $8,000 between us and would like to settle in a moderate climate, somewhere in the vicinity of Rio de Janeiro or south of there north of the frost belt. Our object is to buy a small tract of land, and build a tavern or road house near some of the important sea ports.

I have had experience as chief steward of clubs, etc. and am qualified to manage and operate a place of this kind.

We are both middle aged men (43) and in perfect health, and both members of the B. P. O. Elks and Engineers and we believe we can do very well there if we can believe Elliot or some of the writers who have written on that country, and being a constant reader of *Adventure* and having read many of the answers to queries in it I decided to write you and find out all I can before going too deeply into the matter.

What is the general climate in and around Rio de Janeiro and as far south as Sao Paulo?

Are there any good paved highways in the vicinity of either place?

About what is land worth an hectare?

Are there many English speaking people in that section?

Would you advise us to make a venture of this kind?

What is the general topography of the country around Rio de Janiero?

Where would you suggest as the best place to attempt something along these lines?

Is there any good fishing in any of the streams in these sections?

What do you think of us going overland to Iquitos and take a steamer down the Amazon to the Atlantic or would you advise going by way of Valparaiso, Chile and across to Buenos Aires and up the coast to Brazil?

I cannot find anything about the fee charged by you for your information but am enclosing a 25 ct. piece and if this is not sufficient to cover charges and you will let me know of any other charges I will remit at once.

Thanking you kindly for any information you can give me."—E. C. BOND, Peru, S. A.

Reply, by Mr. P. V. Shaw:—"I am in doubt as to what to advise you about your proposal for a road house in Brazil. It's a new idea for that part of the world and whether the idea would take I frankly don't know. I will answer your specific questions, however.

The climate is fairly good in and around Rio and Sao Paulo, the nights are generally cool even if the days are warm.

There are two highways leading out of both cities of any note and numerous shorter roads, patronized by persons who drive out for an hour or two in rented cars. Land around these two cities is pretty expensive but at present rate of exchange you could purchase a good sized lot fairly cheap in gold. There are not many English speaking people in Brazil; about 10,000 all told I believe.

Rio is extremely mountainous and Sao Paulo though very high is rather level. The country is beautiful.

As I think over your proposition I am inclined to think I would try it. It might go big.

I would advise going by Chile and across. You avoid the dangers from heat, insects and fevers and take much less time.

Sao Paulo is the more alive of the two cities and you have more chances of succeeding there I believe than in Rio."

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Hiking in Central Europe

AN ITINERARY for an artificial flower-maker.

Request:—"I shall appreciate it very much if you can give me some information on a trip I am intending to make.

I am going to Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland. After arrival in Bremen or Hamburg I intend to hike it through these several countries.

First through the Thuringer-Saxony Mountains, then through the Saxony-Swiss Mountains bordering on Germany and Czecho-Slovakia then through Austria and the Austrian Tyrol and Italian Tyrol, thence into Switzerland and through the Swiss Mountains.

What would be the approximate cost of trip?

What kind of outfit? Could one be bought in Hamburg or Bremen?

Passports? In all countries?

What is the sentiment against Americans?

Would one be considered a vagrant?

Are the country inns expensive?

What chance of picking odd jobs along the road?

Where can I procure road maps?

Can one get along with English, some German?

I intend hiking through the Thuringen-Saxony Mountains in the Fall then to Saxony-Czecho Mountains where I intend to lay over for the Winter. Being an artificial flower-maker I have heard that I could procure work in these mountains, Is this true? What country would pay the best wages? Germany or Czecho?

Could one go into business himself there? Would there be any restrictions against foreigners. If you are unable to give me information on this subject could you tell me where to write regarding same. I understand this is against *Adventure's* policy.

In closing would ask your kind opinion regarding a trip of this kind.— ——, Brooklyn, N. Y.

P. S.—*Adventure*—please do not publish name and address.

Reply, by Mr. Fleischer:—The cost of such a trip as you are contemplating varies. Of course, the biggest item is ocean transportation. My suggestion is that you get in touch with some of the big transatlantic lines with offices in New York as to one-class steamers and I think you can get good boats, 10 days' trip, at about $200 round trip.

Then there are passport visas. $10 apiece for every country you intend to visit, the passport itself costs another tenner.

Hiking, of course, won't cost you much, but there are some railroad trips to be counted on and, although they are inexpensive, it will count up. Your outfit and incidentals included, I would roughly estimate that $500 will carry you through in fine style.

As to outfit. I would buy nothing over here but a pair of good hiking shoes. High laced boots rather. You can buy everything else in Hamburg. There is an outfitter's store either in or next door to the Biber-House, in the neighborhood of the Central Railway Station and you can get everything your heart desires right there. No doubt you can also buy an outfit in Bremen. Knickers, or corduroy pants, a corduroy jacket, rucksack and a heavy cane, that's all you need.

For passports see above.

Latest reports as to sentiment against Americans vary. They still regard every American as a Croesus, but don't let that interfere with your plans. There is nothing personal in the Europeans' attitude and as long as you mind your own business and avoid War talk, you will be all right.

Traveling on foot with an American passport in your pocket will protect you from charges of vagrancy.

No, country inns are not expensive. In fact I should prefer them to hotels in towns. Avoid summer resort hotels in the Alps and look for village inns. You can get by with $1 to $2 a night, including meals.

I do not think there are many chances for picking up odd jobs. Since you are an artificial flower-maker, this trade is localized in certain districts abroad. In Thuringia and in the Ore Mountains of Czechoslovakia. These people are all poor and would resent an intruding foreigner.

Good road maps may be procured anywhere in Germany. In fact you can get your full supply in either Hamburg or Bremen. Insist on the maps issued by Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, Stuttgart. They are the best.

Yes, you will get along with English and German. But in Czechoslovakia make it plain that you know English and German, no other tongue. They all speak German but hate to use it.

You are right. Par. 3 of the heading of "AA" prohibits information as to employment. Our consuls abroad will direct you.

Since you ask my opinion about your trip, frankly, I envy you, because it will be some time before I can make it and I have mapped it all out too:

Starting from Hamburg. Crossing Elbe to Harburg. Then Lueneburg to Wittingen to Braunschweig.

Starting from Bremen. First to Meinburg, to Hannover to Braunschweig.

From there to Goslar through the Harz Mountains to Nordhousen, Gotha to Erfurt, Weimar, then East to Leipzig, Meissen, Dresden. Through the Saxo-Bohemian Switzerland; along the Elbe River to Bodenbach (Czechoslovakia), to Aussig, Leitmeritz to Melnik. There the Moldau flows into the Elbe. Down the Moldau River to Prague, South to Budweis, Krumau to Freistadt in Austria. To Linz on the Danube, Voecklabruck to Salzburg. From there you would have to re-cross into Bavaria, Traunstein, then back into Tyrol at Kugstein, to Innsbruck over Brenner Pass to Sterzing, Meran, getting into Italy, to Bozen, or as it is called now Bolzano, to Trient Rovereto on the Lake Garda into the lowlands of the Po River, Ala, Verona, Brescia to Milano.

From Milano you will have to pick your route into Switzerland. There are too many. And in the Swiss Alps it will be hard climbing. However, there are beautiful and good roads and you won't find going very hard.

When you get back from your trip, remember us and let us hear from you what you have seen and heard.

Here's luck to you.

A Ford in Mexico

LOOK out for scorpions.

Request:—"Four of us are thinking of taking a trip across the continent and through Mexico with a Ford and a Hudson, camping on the way.

1. Can a timber expert and former forest service man land a job in Mexico?
2. Do you know any companies who might need such a man?
3. Is it possible to motor from the border to Mexico City, camping on the way?
4. Are there frequent garages and filling stations on the way where we can get gas, oil, water and repairs, or is it best to carry a supply of gas, oil, water and spare parts?
5. Where can we get maps showing the state of the roads?
6. What formalities are necessary at the border to take a Ford and a Hudson in?

7. Is a deposit required on cars?
8. Is a passport necessary or advisable?
9. Is it well to go armed—or is it forbidden to take firearms across the border?
10. Is it advisable to sleep on the ground, or is it best to use cots?
11. Are the villages near each other along the best route?
12. Are food and water easily obtainable?
13. Is it possible to reach Durango in the State of Durango by car, camping on the way?
14. What is the attitude of the natives toward Americans?
15. Please answer Nos. 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 in relation to the route from Mexico City to Durango.

Any other hints or suggestions that might help us, or be of use to us on the trip will be very much appreciated.

I am enclosing self-addressed envelope and stamps as requested.

Thanking you in advance for your kindness."—Francis Shaw Curtis, Ashfield, Mass.

Reply, by Mr. Whiteaker:—"You may be able to land a job in one of the timbered sections of Mexico. The chances are pretty slim though for any kind of a job now. Thousands are without work—the majority of these would not work if they had the opportunity, it is true, still many who would haven't the chance. You would have to be on the spot in order to get a job. I do not know of any openings at the present time. Many tourists make the trip in cars every year so you can do the same I suppose.

It would not be difficult to obtain gas, oil and water on the route. Be better to be prepared with extra parts for your car. Some rough roads and repair bills are high. Gas and oil sell for a good price also so a few extra gallons would not be amiss. You could write to the Secretary of the American Chamber of Commerce of any of the principal cities of the northern section and they will supply you with information about the roads in their vicinity. You will have to have your cars registered, a permit to enter with firearms, a passport is necessary, a head tax to be paid, and a hunting license taken out. In addition to the expenses above you will have to have at least $100 on your person or credit slips showing you have at least that amount. Some sleep on the ground while others have cots or hammocks. Individual taste. I never bothered about carrying cots or hammocks but had a poncho and a couple of heavy blankets under me to keep out the chill. Days are warm but the nights are cold. Indian villages are but a few miles apart but don't expect too much from them. Stock up in one of the larger towns to last you until you arrive at another town. Food can be had along the route but good water is scarce. Always boil the water that you use for drinking purposes. Yes you can get into Durango by road. Look out for the scorpions in this State. The whole country is alive with them."

The full statement of the sections in this department, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

"Ask Adventure" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address Joseph Cox, *Adventure*, New York.

LOST TRAILS

Note—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

ERWIN, GEORGE RICHARD. His membership number is 15794 in the International Association of Bridge Structural & Ornamental Iron Workers. At present he holds membership in Local Union No. 40, 62 East 106th St., New York City, N. Y. Last heard from in March, 1908, at that time he was in New York City. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address Mary C. Arvin, 1612 Boylston Ave., Seattle, Wash.

LUCAS, ARTHUR. Age about 50 years, blue eyes, dark hair. Last heard of in 1917. Has been in Michigan for several years and region of Great Lakes, and worked as boss over gang of men in big woods of Michigan. Also on boat running between Sault Ste. Marie and Ashtabula. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address Mrs. M. A. Jones, Box 165, Benjamin, Texas.

ANDREWS, JOHN OATES. John dear, please write to mother. Everything at home is alright.—Elizabeth, Poteau, Okla.

DENNIS, HARRY. Age 57 years, 5 feet, 7 inches tall, brown hair, blue eyes. Last heard of he was a teamster, working for a gravel company. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Mrs. Chas. Dennis, Box 208, Portola, Calif.

JEFFERS, MAJOR LEON. Known as "Jeff" and "One Shot." Late of Para and Caracas. Last heard of about twelve years ago in Ceuta. Originally came from somewhere in New England. Any information will be appreciated.—Address William H. Breen, Gen. Delivery, Springfield, Mass.

BON, WALTER C. Left home May 28, 1925, driving Chevrolet car, Louisiana license No. 147-771. Height 6 feet, slender, dark eyes, brown hair, scar on right temple, age 50 years. Any information will be appreciated by his wife.—Address Mrs. W. C. Bon, 344 Washington St., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

STEVENSON, WILLIS B. Formerly of St. Jo, Texas. Last heard of at Montague, Calif., Dec. 1921. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address Lee Stevenson, St. Jo, Texas.

WILLIAMS, JONATHAN ROBERTSON. I am anxious to hear from you. I have great matters to do with you in Matto Grosso, and afterward on the beautiful hills in the Prov. of Cordalia. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Salvador Moreno, 360 Callao Dept. No. 2, Rosario de Sata Fe, Argentina, America del sur.

GAYLORD or LESTER ST. JOHN. Gaylord last seen in Seattle, Washington, in 1923. Lester last seen in Twin Falls, Idaho, in 1918 or 1919, when he left and joined the Marines. Information of them or any of the other four children—Eva, Frank, Reuben or oldest girl will be appreciated by their youngest sister Mildred.—Address Mrs. Mildred Phillips, 1915 Center St., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

WIERITOCH, WILLIAM. Last heard of in 1891 when he was in Buffalo, New York. Harnessmaker by trade, supposed to be in Los Angeles, Calif. Any information will be appreciated by his son.—Address Henry Wieritoch, 89 Mills St., Buffalo, New York.

AR. P. See Cuyamel Fruit Co., in N. O. Write me.—Address C. L. P. La Lima, care of C. F. Co., Puerto Cortez, Honduras.

PUGH, JAMES W. Last heard of about two years ago, when he was residing at an apartment house on 25th St., Los Angeles, Calif. He at one time lived at Racine, Wisconsin, may have returned there with his wife and two children. Any information will be appreciated as to his present address.—Address Jor Miller, care of Western Electric Co., 404 W. Ninth St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

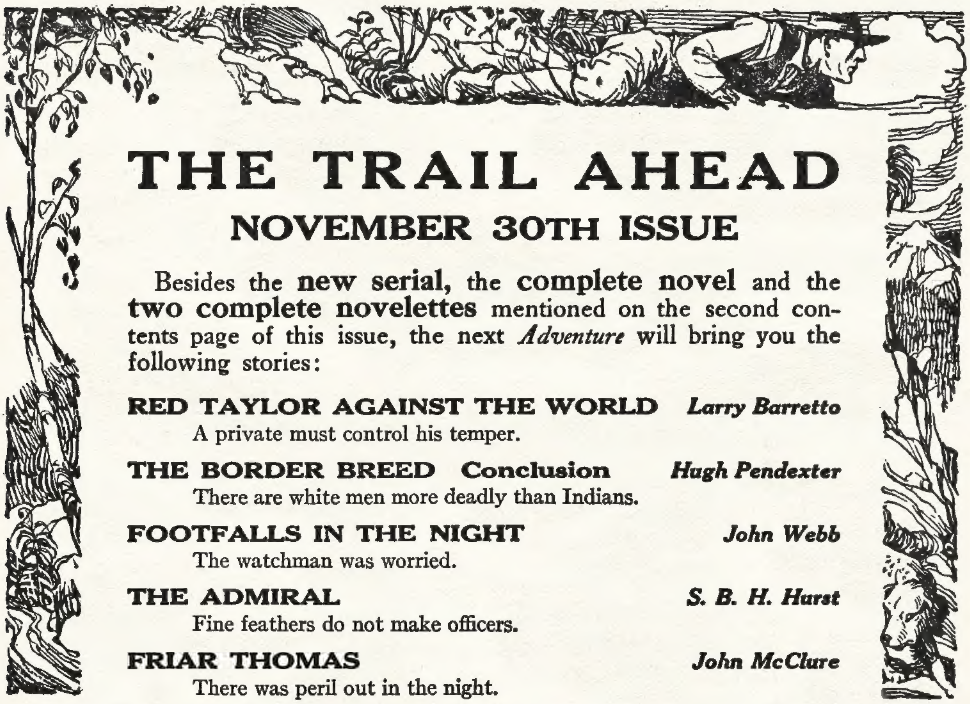
UNCLAIMED MAIL

PALMER, George Jack; Wright, Charles J.; Yore, Clem.

THE following have been inquired for in either the October 10 or October 30, 1925, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

BAKER, RAY A.; Bettschen, George F.; Braley, Ralph; Bridges, Alfred Renton; Brigham, Franklin Wilson; Best, Christine and Catharine; Cohen, Mike; Davis, Andrew Lester; Day, Herbert; Garland, John; Hale, Edna; Hardy, Constance; Hoag, H.; Lalla, George; Locke, Charles F.; McCarthy, Joseph A.; Mallott, Willard E.; Meacham, John L.; Muir, Will Carter; Prince, Philip J.; Pugh, William Alonza; Reeves, Reginald, Floyd; Rivet, Fred; Rosenfeld, Max; Shakelford, Emliss; Tanner, Dick.

MISCELLANEOUS: Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Stewart W. Cairncorss or Frank Veidiglione, who were soldiers in the Ordnance Dept. of Raritan Arsenal, Metuchen, New Jersey in 1920. Would like to hear from any member of the old 21st Balloon Co., from the date of 1919 to 1922.



THE TRAIL AHEAD

NOVEMBER 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **new serial,** the **complete novel** and the **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

RED TAYLOR AGAINST THE WORLD *Larry Barretto*
A private must control his temper.

THE BORDER BREED Conclusion *Hugh Pendexter*
There are white men more deadly than Indians.

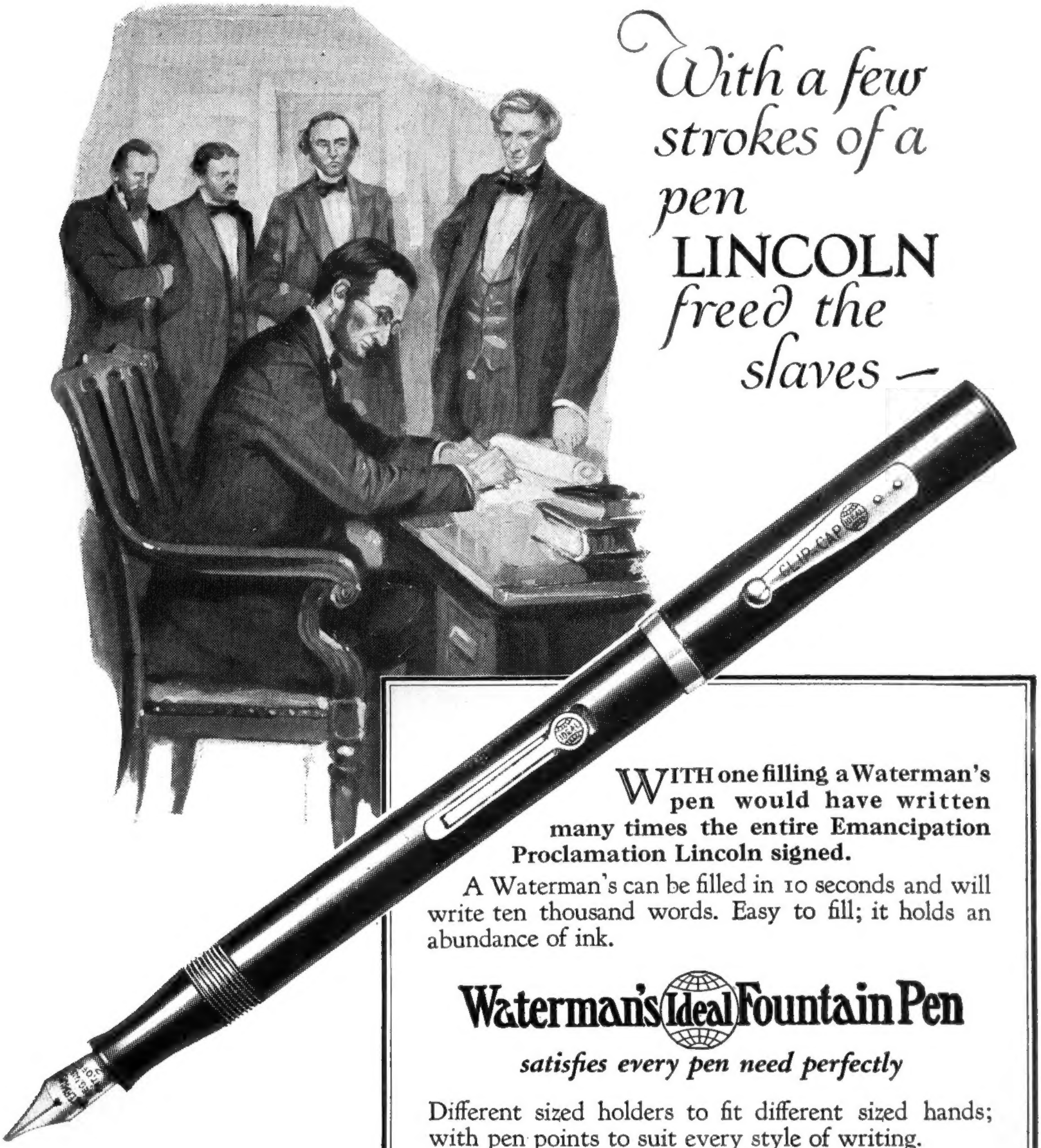
FOOTFALLS IN THE NIGHT *John Webb*
The watchman was worried.

THE ADMIRAL *S. B. H. Hurst*
Fine feathers do not make officers.

FRIAR THOMAS *John McClure*
There was peril out in the night.

STILL
FARTHER
AHEAD

THE THREE ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by J. Allan Dunn, Arthur O. Friel, Leonard H. Nason, Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, Harold Lamb, E. S. Pladwell, David R. Sparks, Talbot Mundy, T. S. Stribling, Thomson Burtis and J. D. Newsom; short stories by Charles Victor Fischer, John Murray Reynolds, Alan Le May, Captain Dingle, Bruce Johns, Wilkeson O'Connell and others; stories of cowboys on the Western range, doughboys on the Western front, Yankee explorers up the Amazon, Cossacks in Central Asia, aviators in the oilfields, hardcase skippers on the Atlantic, daring men in dangerous places up and down the earth.



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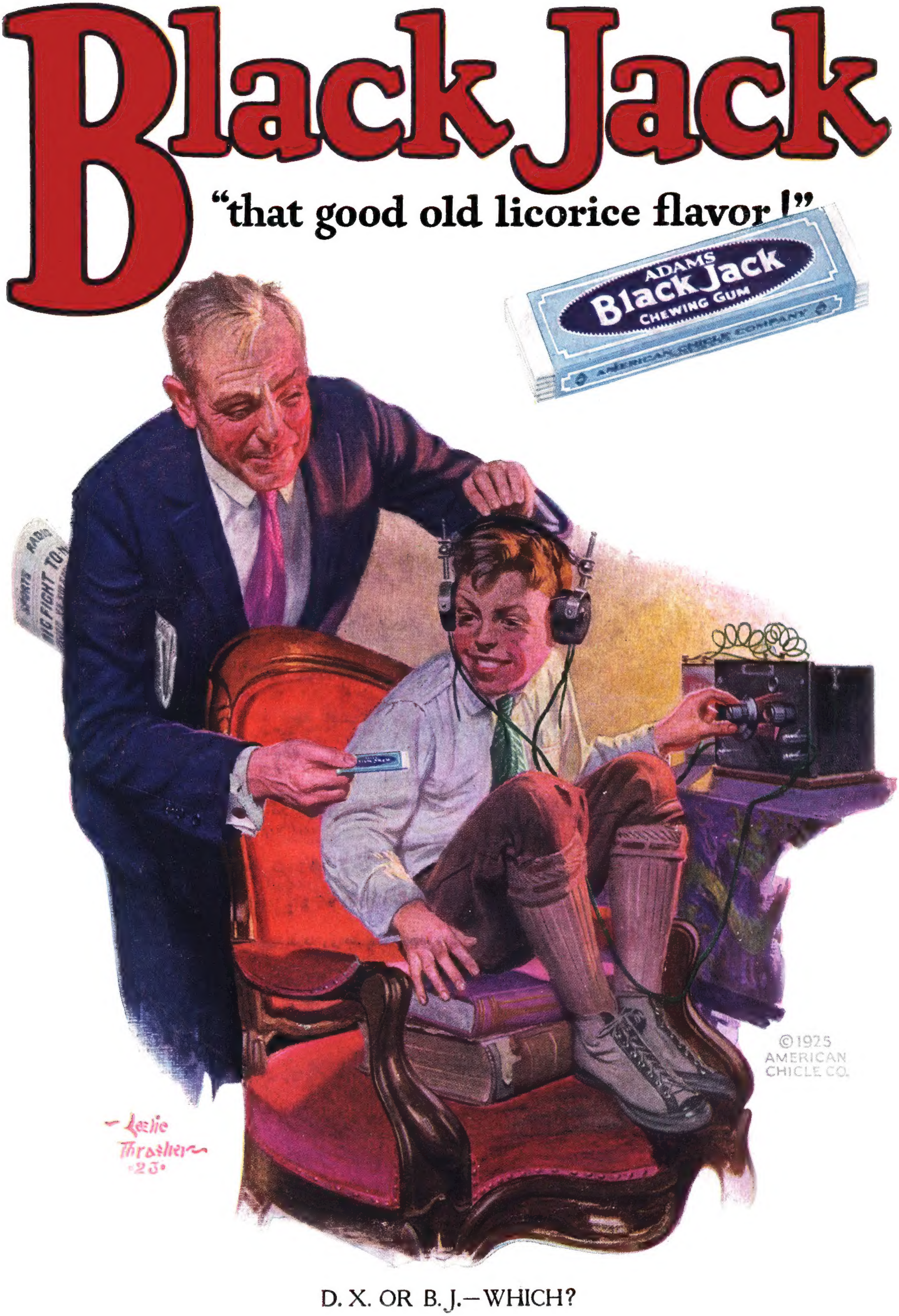

Black Jack

"that good old licorice flavor!"

D. X. OR B. J.—WHICH?

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